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GOD OF FAITH: GOD OF HISTORY
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A STUDY OF VARIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the
School of Theology at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Religion

by
Albert W. Parker
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June 1967

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This dissertation, written by

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To My Wife

The primary image is that of a man chained to a wall in a deep and secluded cell. He is forced, because of his position, to watch a body chained to the opposite wall decompose and fall apart. The sight, the stench, the overwhelming ugliness of what occurs plagues his consciousness until he faints. But in the last moment before his senses fail he realized that the opposite wall is but a mirror and he has been watching himself. This is the impact of the historical notion. This is the overwhelming terror of history. This is the result of the search for meaning. When a man looks at the past and asks "why," he gets no answer. Mankind is mute like a dead corpse. Meaning has fled with the life-blood of the living. It can be found only in those now alive. But the "how" of it all can be discovered. The body as it decomposes reveals its members and its make-up, its "history." We cannot flee our imprisoned selves but we are not without some vision.

PREFACE

In this dissertation, I propose to do an historical study of faith, that is, an analysis of the concepts in which faith finds its expression at certain historical moments. In some way, a particular "cluster of concepts" comes to be a meaningful way of expressing that which lies always hidden in the hearts or souls of the believers. This, apparently, has always been so. The communication of these concepts has guaranteed the continuance of the faith, or perhaps more accurately, of the religion, at least up to a certain point. Assuming that every concept or concrete expression of faith lies readily available in the religious heritage of the believer, it becomes immediately apparent that only the particular "clustering" is new. But why this particular "cluster?" If we say that it is because they are individually meaningful and meaningfully related, it may be that we have begged the question. It may also be that we have stumbled on a clue to the answer. There is a reciprocal relation between expression and meaning in conjunction with faith.

Such a conception may speak to a contemporary religious problem, as well. If we in our modern, urban culture are cutting ourselves off from our religious traditions and heritage, we may be also losing the expressions of faith that we need to clothe that which is or will become meaningful.¹ If, instead, we examine that which we

¹On urban civilization and the collapse of traditional religion see Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

have found inappropriate and not suited to our present age, if we look again at that which we have discarded, if we filter our "ash-heap" even as paleontologists filter through the rubbish-heaps of mankind (often the garbage dumps) we may find items of great value, right and righteous elements we can use to explain our present situation and our faith.

There is no one forbidding us to return to the past, not even to our immediate past. It is not a sacred or forbidden burial ground. One of the signs of maturity in an individual man or in a race is the ability to face one's own past and all of its ramifications. The past is no illusion. It is a reality that may help us.

In The Irony of American History, Reinhold Niebuhr explores the transference of ancient ideologies onto the American scene and points out the foolishness of such impositions.² It is not in such direct transference that our faith must find its expression. Such expression must spring to life of itself. Yet, it has obvious affinities with ancient expressions. While the total construct or configuration may be new, the elements that make up the new configuration are apparently always there.

In order to explore this entire subject, I have established and followed the following pattern: Chapter I, IV, and VII are interpretive statements. Chapter I provides contemporary background for

²Reinhold Niebuhr, The Irony of American History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954).

the study, especially as it relates to the conception of faith, itself. Chapter IV is a "critical interlude" which explores the "other side" of the dissertation, the concept of history (transmission) especially as it relates to the crucial question of whether Christ was the End or the Midpoint of history. To insert it at this point seemed to be only putting it in its correct historical place. Chapter VII is a "conceptual conclusion." The dynamics of the dissertation rest here. The transition to our contemporary conceptions about faith, I think, can be made at this point. Application from this conclusion can only be made to specific situations, that is, existentially. The dilemma about faith and meaning, I am saying, can only be resolved historically: that is, in the encounter of personalities in every day life.

The descriptive narrative begins with Chapter II. This chapter plus Chapters III, V, and VI, are attempts to "lay-out" an historical situation as it relates to a people or to an individual, and the conceptions in which faith finds its expression at that particular time. This is an attempt to be generally descriptive, and not analytical. The historical situation and personalities used herein have been arbitrarily chosen, as they suited the purposes of this dissertation. Many other historical places and personalities could have been incorporated just as easily with, I think, similar results.

I would express, here, my appreciation to the members of my dissertation committee, Doctor Frank W. Kimper, Mister Jack C. Verheyden, and Doctor Donald H. Rhoades, for their constant encouragement in this regard, for their patience in assisting me personally,

and for their willingness to allow an enthralled student a wide range of creative expression.

CHAPTER I

THE SEARCH FOR FAITH

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. In the first forty days a boy had been with him. But after forty days without a fish the boy's parents had told him that the old man was now definitely and finally salao, which is the worst form of unlucky, and the boy had gone at their orders in another boat which caught three good fish the first week. . . .

"Santiago, the boy said to him as they climbed the bank from where the skiff was hauled up. "I could go with you again. We've made some money."

The old man had taught the boy to fish and the boy loved him.

"No," the old man said. "You're with a lucky boat. Stay with them."

"But remember how you went eighty-seven days without fish and then we caught big ones every day for three weeks."

"I remember," the old man said. "I know you did not leave me because you doubted."

"It was papa made me leave. I am a boy and I must obey him."

"I know," the old man said. "It is quite normal."

"He hasn't much faith."

"No," the old man said. "But we have. Haven't we?"

"Yes," the boy said.¹

It begins simply enough. Santiago and the boy have something in common, something called faith. It is common not only in type, however, but also in degree. "He hasn't much faith," is a descriptive judgment. It is a point of comparison. To the boy's parents, "the old man was now definitely and finally salao, which is the worst form of unlucky." To the boy, however, this is not the case. He has faith, and that to a great degree; equal to that of the old man, himself. It is a type of faith powerful enough to keep the old man

¹Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), pp. 9-11.

young, and vibrant, and alive, inside, behind his eyes which "were the same color as the sea and were cheerful and undefeated."²

The desire of the boy to go with the old man is the desire of any person to be with that one with whom there is a deep affinity. Such yearning is as normal as the "restless soul" of Augustine, and as potent. And the detachment, or separation, is as necessary as is the need and the desire to be an individual. A man may be best described by what he is when he is alone.³

There has been a long relationship between the boy and the old man, for the old man had taught the boy to fish. He had also taught him something else. He had taught him to have faith.

Or did he only kindle a faith that lay latent within the boy already?

Or did he somehow plant it in the boy, as a seed is planted, a seed of thought that blossoms into faith?

Or did he merely shape faith, like an espalier, into a unique form like his own?

How did he obtain such faith himself? Was it an accident, a mutation of ordinary faith, the faith of the other villagers? Was it caused by his being an old man, forced to be alone because of his

²Ibid., p. 10.

³Dean Inge makes a similar statement in regard to man's religiosity; "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitude. (If you are never solitary; you are never religious)." Leonard L. Levinson, The Left Handed Dictionary (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 195.

uselessness?

Did the faith truly pass from the old man to the boy?

It begins simply enough. It is soon vastly complex.

What is faith?

It is the great intangible. It is like a force, a potency, a power. It is an unseen element that grasps an occasional living soul in a unique way to demonstrate its own uniqueness.

Commonly, faith is thought to be belief in something. This is an error, yet it touches on the truth, for faith expresses itself in that which is concrete, and in an endless variety of forms. It expresses itself only in the concrete. This is the cause of our major problem in dealing with what the word faith implies. We attach it to both the unseeable element and to its concrete manifestation.

The old man had been eighty-four days without taking a fish. For the first forty days the boy had been with him, until the old man had been pronounced salao by the boy's parents. At least once before the old man had gone a long time without catching a single fish, eighty-seven days, but then the boy had been much smaller and was still only learning to fish. In crude terms he was an apprentice, a liability. As long as this was so it didn't matter that the old man caught no fish. The boy was learning the trade, and from a skilled fisherman, though now useless and, therefore, alone. But now the boy is an asset, a fisherman in his own right, and he must stay with a lucky boat.

The boy had no desire to leave this old man whom he had come to

worship, to idealize. It was a relationship of affection and of love, and the separation was painful because of the enforced, broken loyalty. The only consolation is that Santiago understands, "I know you did not leave me because you doubted." It is small consolation.

It is not belaboring the point to stress this unique relationship. The boy idealized a man with whom he was intimately acquainted. There were no hidden nooks or crannies in the old man's life to tarnish the idol. Our relationship to our idols is usually distant and necessarily limited. What effect does this have on our faith? What is more distant than God? What is less concrete? What picture must we conjure up to idolize Him? Even Christ is a distant and unknowable figure. We are intimate only with those of our own kind and in our own time. What has this to do with faith? Everything.

To speak thus is to speak existentially. John Killinger defines the term in this fashion.

Perhaps "existentialism" is only a Tiffany word for a Woolworth concept, but it serves as a convenient tag for the thought of any writer who is more than ordinarily concerned about what it means to exist. A full understanding of the word involves a knowledge of its Latin roots ex sistere, from ex stare, a phrase meaning "to stand out." The primary concern of those who have been called existentialists is that the individual human being "stand out" as an individual, separated from all other being, human or non-human.⁴

Although John Killinger has "no intention of tailoring Hemingway into a poor man's Heidegger, or of bestowing philosophical significance on the fiction of a man who would be the first to deny

⁴John Killinger, Hemingway and the Dead Gods (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960), p. 2.

that he is a philosopher," he does stress the fact, "that there are demonstrable affinities between Hemingway and the existentialists" . . . at certain points.⁵

The basic communal problem of the existentialists is our basic problem in the transmission of faith as well, the relationship of persons of established separate identities and the communication of values (if faith may be considered a value). On the other hand, it may be suggested that the transmission or communication of this particular value (faith) is essential to the establishment of a truly separate, and vital identity. This apparent and subtle paradox is another root problem in the study of faith.

I. Existentialism

It is not my intention to broach an analysis of existentialism at this point, yet it is apparently essential, considering that the crucial relation of an interpersonal intimacy to the transmission of faith has been already stressed, that I at least offer a cursory overview of the subject. Any individual may yet stress with the boy in The Old Man and the Sea, at the end of the story when he demands to go fishing again with Santiago, and Santiago has said no, because he is not lucky anymore, "The hell with the luck. . . .I'll bring the luck with me."⁶ So it may be with faith.

Existentialism stresses individualism. It also stresses the

⁵Ibid., p. 16.

⁶Hemingway, op. cit., p. 137.

human situation. The plight of any individualistic stress is always the relation of the individual to what may be called the community, whether that community be one other individual, or many. The human situation is a communal one. We are involved together in our individual and mutual destinies. It is always to be noted that existentialism is normally listed as a revolt against traditional philosophy. It is a variegated, individualistic (of course) revolt. Therefore, it is marked by its great variety. Illustrative of this whole viewpoint is this statement by Walter Kaufmann:

Existentialism is not a philosophy but a label for several widely different revolts against traditional philosophy. Most of the living "existentialists" have repudiated this label, and a bewildered outsider might well conclude that the only thing they have in common is a marked aversion for each other. To add to the confusion, many writers of the past have frequently been hailed as members of this movement, and it is extremely doubtful whether they would have appreciated the company to which they are consigned. In view of this, it might be argued that the label "existentialism" ought to be abandoned altogether.

Certainly, existentialism is not a school of thought nor reducible to any set of tenets. The three writers who appear invariably on every list of "existentialists" -- Jaspers, Heidegger, and Sartre -- are not in agreement on essentials. Such alleged precursors as Pascal and Kierkegaard differed from all three men by being dedicated Christians; and Pascal was a Catholic of sorts while Kierkegaard was a Protestant's Protestant. If, as is often done, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky are included in the fold, we must make room for an impassioned anti-Christian and an even more fanatical Greek-Orthodox Russian imperialist. By the time we consider adding Rilke, Kafka, and Camus, it becomes plain that one essential feature shared by all these men is their perverid individualism. The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life -- that is the heart of existentialism.⁷

⁷Walter Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre (Cleveland: World, 1956), p. 11.

But what of the relation of religion to existentialism?

Kaufmann states that:

Religion has always been existentialist: it has always insisted that mere schools of thought and bodies of belief are not enough, that too much of our thinking is remote from that which truly matters, and that we must change our lives.⁸

Such decision to change may be individual, but we cannot avoid the context of community. It is then not the relation to "schools of thought" or "bodies of belief" that really matter to faith, but the relation of one man to another.

Hemingway had no liaison with the existentialists, is no existentialist, but he captures the existential problem, and he solves it. At least, he solves it in his fiction. The boy is no mere "hanger-on" or sub-character in the story. He is essential to its potency and to its meaning. What advantage is there to the great existential feat of Santiago without his disciple? What purpose does it serve the villagers who do not know him as the boy knows him? What sense does such courage and faith make in the story without the boy? Or outside of the story in any man? The disciple is necessary. Without him there is no need for the teacher.

Killinger says of the relation of Hemingway to the existentialists in his "Forward" to Hemingway and the Dead Gods:

But it is more likely that the similarities in their world views are due not to collaboration but to living in the same milieu, and that Hemingway's philosophy of life, which appears already to have taken form in his earliest stories and sketches, and which therefore antedates every publication of both the German and the French existentialists, has not been affected by contact with this group of sophisticated thinkers, but has been the hard, wrung-from-the-heart product of life in an age which

⁸Ibid., p. 49.

has been, in many ways, more difficult than any others. In a time when death is so mechanical and impersonal as to produce the nada-concept, when one of man's most profound fears is of nihilation by absorption into the machine, the mass, or whatever, it is not unlikely that many thinking men arrive independently at approximately the same conclusions about what it means to exist.⁹

Yet, even the lone figure of Kierkegaard, "acknowledged father of existential philosophy in our day,"¹⁰ gives us little help in the problem of relationship. He was too opposed to "the crowd," and too much involved with "that individual" (himself) to offer us much middle ground. His Christianity is too decisively individualistic. Fiction gives us a more balanced view, in the main.¹¹ This is perhaps so because fiction must come down from devotion to any "idea" and relate to life as it is. There must be some authenticity. There must be some reality.

II. What Is Faith?

So far we have dealt with faith as a simple thing, though realizing somewhat its basic complexity. Hemingway's description assumes a great deal of common knowledge on the part of his readers, and we "know" what he is talking about. Yet, when it comes to describing what we "know," we find ourselves faced with a baffling problem, and a common one. We often "know" what we "know" until we are asked to explain it. Then we realize how little we "know" about

⁹Killinger, op. cit., p. vii.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹Exceptions will be found among the uniquely existential writers.

what we "know." After all faith is faith. What else could it be?

Many have dealt with what faith is, ranging all the way from definitions in theological word-books to the expressions of simple believers.¹² Yet, none have dealt with its complexity in as thorough a manner as Paul Tillich has in his little book, Dynamics of Faith. His "Introductory Remarks" have this to say about the word "faith:"

There is hardly a word in the religious language, both theological and popular, which is subject to more misunderstandings, distortions and questionable definitions than the word "faith." It belongs to those terms which need healing before they can be used for the healing of men. Today the term "faith" is more productive of disease than of health. It confuses, misleads, creates alternately skepticism and fanaticism, intellectual resistance and emotional surrender, rejection of genuine religion and subjection to substitutes. Indeed, one is tempted to suggest that the word "faith" should be dropped completely; but desirable as that may be it is hardly possible. A powerful tradition protects it. And there is as yet no substitute expressing the reality to which the term "faith" points. So, for the time being, the only way of dealing with the problem is to try to reinterpret the word and remove the confusing and distorting connotations, some of which are the heritage of centuries. It is the hope of the writer that he will succeed at least in this purpose even if he does not succeed in his more far-reaching aim to convince some readers of the hidden power of faith within themselves and of the infinite significance of that to which faith is related.¹³

Faith, for Tillich, is the state of being ultimately concerned. The dynamics of faith are related to this state. Any of the concerns of man, vital or spiritual, may become ultimate if it demands total surrender for its acceptance and if it promises total fulfillment.

¹²For example, Alan Richardson (ed.), A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: Macmillan, 1964), p. 75ff. The usual comment this author has from the ordinary churchman is that "faith is belief in something."

¹³Paul Tillich, The Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 9.

For example, the nation or success may become the ultimate concern, a focus of faith. That such ultimate concerns fail is not a sign of a lack of faith, but a sign of "misplaced" faith in that which is not ultimate in and of itself has been given the status of an ultimate concern. The problem is, of course, that there is no object or ideal which is in and of itself ultimate. Faith demands a recognition of this fact. The only ultimate concern that can be guaranteed is an ultimate concern for the ultimate. This is obviously an impossibility for finite man, aware of his limitations. But as the ultimate is symbolized in finite images or actions it becomes possible for man to live by faith.

If faith is a state, it is also, according to Tillich, an act of the total personality. It is the most central act of man, of both his conscious and unconscious structures. It is also a matter of freedom, for freedom is the possibility of centered personal acts. In this sense, faith and freedom are identical. In the act of faith the elements of personality, the rational and the non-rational, are not united, but transcended.

For Tillich the term "ultimate concern" unites the objective (the faith which is believed) and the subjective (the faith through which one believes) sides of the act of faith. There is, then, no faith without a content toward which it is directed, and no way of having the content of faith except in the act of faith. They are inseparably united.¹⁴ The difference between objectivity and

¹⁴Ibid., p. 6. This returns us to our initial problem in the transmission of faith, which is similar. It must be had to be communicated. It must be communicated to be had.

subjectivity is overcome only in terms like, ultimate, unconditional, infinite, and absolute. In these the subject-object scheme is broken. The subject is not expressible without its object, and vice-versa.

This gives us a criterion for determining true and false ultimacy. "The finite which claims ultimacy without having it (as, e.g., a nation or success) is not able to transcend the subject-object scheme. . . .In true faith the ultimate concern is a concern about the ultimate."¹⁵

There is an element of uncertainty in faith which can never be removed, according to Tillich, and the element in faith which accepts this is courage.¹⁶ This courage is a daring self-affirmation of one's own being in spite of his finitude. There is risk involved here. This risk is man's greatest risk. That which is considered to be a matter of ultimate concern may turn out to be only transitory. Therefore, there is always the possibility of failure, and such a failure may destroy the meaning of one's life. This is especially true because every faith has a concrete element in itself, something or somebody about which one is concerned. This something or somebody is not ultimate and almost unavoidably fails. Thus, faith fails in its concrete expression. However, we do not usually retain the distinction between the ultimate and its concrete expression; and so

¹⁵Ibid., p. 10,12.

¹⁶This is a larger concept of courage than is normally considered. See Paul Tillich, The Courage to Be (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

with the failure of the concrete expression all of faith disappears. Yet, the unconditional has not failed. Only a new content of faith is required.

Doubt, here, becomes a necessary element in faith. It comes out of the risk of faith. But this doubt is neither a scientific nor a skeptical doubt. Tillich calls it "the existential doubt."¹⁷ It is aware of the element of insecurity in every existential truth. Because faith includes courage, it can include the doubt about itself. Doubt is never a permanent experience within the act of faith, but it is an element in the structure of faith. Faith is always faith "in spite of." Doubt is never the negative of faith. It is always a part of the state of ultimate concern. Serious doubt is always a confirmation of faith.

Because of this, Tillich claims, the creativity of the human mind is in no way restricted. But what of the community of faith? Tillich asks, "Can a community of faith -- e.g., a church -- accept a faith which includes doubt as an intrinsic element and calls the seriousness of doubt an expression of faith?"¹⁸ If, as Tillich also claims, a man can actualize his faith only in a community of language, because faith needs a language in which to express itself, the language of symbol and myth, what is the relation of individual and community? The church always protects itself against individualism, yet the individual needs to realize his own ultimate concern, his own

¹⁷Tillich, Dynamics of Faith, p. 20.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 23.

faith. The church itself is only an expression of faith, as are creedal statements. Both the individual and the Church stand under divine judgment. It is not faith against faith, but the fact that both point beyond themselves to the ultimate which is beyond all faiths. Thus, it is a risk for the community as well as a risk for the individual. This is the character of dynamic faith, for Paul Tillich. Criticism and doubt show that Christianity also stands under divine judgment, even though it has accepted the sign of the Cross.

III. The Source Of Faith

Perhaps the most distinctive analysis of the source of faith, that is, of its beginnings, is to be found in the unique analysis of the event of Abraham and Isaac done by Søren Kierkegaard, the great Danish existentialist philosopher-theologian. In his book Fear and Trembling, in the "Preface," he writes these words:

In our time nobody is content to stop with faith but wants to go further. It would perhaps be rash to ask where these people are going, but it is surely a sign of breeding and culture for me to assume that everybody has faith, for otherwise it would be queer for them to be. . .going further. In those old days it was different, then faith was a task for a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that dexterity in faith is not acquired in a few days or weeks. When the tried oldster drew near to his last hour, having fought the good fight and kept the faith, his heart was still young enough not to have forgotten that fear and trembling which chastened the youth, which the man indeed held in check, but which no man quite outgrows. . .except as he might succeed at the earliest opportunity in going further. Where these revered figures arrived, that is the point where everybody in our day begins to go further.¹⁹

¹⁹Søren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 23.

Such a concept, "faith was a task for a whole lifetime," stands often in opposition to our contemporary view, as Kierkegaard suggests. We assume faith. There is no challenge in it. How can we expect to be recognized as having kept the faith if there is no effort in the keeping? In effect we have moved on to Christian love without a foundation of faith. But securing such a foundation is not easy, especially when it is so confusing to try to state exactly what faith is, or to determine how faith is attained.

Even though one were capable of converting the whole content of faith into the form of a concept, it does not follow that one has adequately conceived faith and understands how one got into it, or how it got into one.²⁰

Genesis (Chapters 11-25) tells us the story of Abram (exalted father) become Abraham (father of a multitude of nations), a promise revealed in a name because of Abram's faith (Genesis 17:4-8). By faith Abram had left Ur, the land of his fathers and became a sojourner in the land of promise. By faith Abraham received the promise that in his seed all races of the world would be blessed. Into his old age he waited, childless, but persistent in faith. The promise was fulfilled in Isaac, whom he accepted in faith. Yet, once more is he tested. Isaac is demanded by God as a sacrifice; "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." (Genesis 22:2) And Abraham obeyed!

²⁰Ibid., p. 24.

Yet Abraham believed and did not doubt, he believed the preposterous. If Abraham had doubted -- then he would have done something else, something glorious; for how could Abraham do anything but what is great and glorious. He would have marched up to Mount Moriah, he would have cleft the fire-wood, lit the pyre, drawn the knife -- he would have cried out to God, "Despise not this sacrifice, it is not the best thing I possess, that I know well, for what is an old man in comparison with the child of promise; but it is the best I am able to give Thee. Let Isaac never come to know this, that he may console himself with his youth." He would have plunged the knife into his own breast. He would have been admired in the world, and his name would not have been forgotten; but it is one thing to be admired, and another to be the guiding star which saves the anguished.²¹

Any other action, except strict obedience, may have spoken of Abraham's cleverness, or his courage, or his dignity, or his bargaining ability before God, but it would not have spoken of faith. And if he had doubted?

If Abraham when he stood upon Mount Moriah had doubted, if he had gazed about him irresolutely, if before he drew the knife he had by chance discovered the ram, if God had permitted him to offer it instead of Isaac -- then he would have betaken himself home, everything would have been the same, he has Sarah, he retained Isaac, and yet how changed! For his retreat would have been a flight, his salvation an accident, his reward dishonor, his future perhaps perdition. Then he would have borne witness neither to his faith nor to God's grace, but would have testified only how dreadful it is to march out to Mount Moriah. Then Abraham would not have been forgotten, nor would Mount Moriah, this mountain would then be mentioned, not like Ararat where the Ark landed, but would be spoken as a consternation, because it was here that Abraham doubted.²²

Instead, he needs no defender of his actions or of his attitude. He gained all -- and he retained Isaac!

Abraham moves beyond what Kierkegaard calls "infinite resignation" and reaches faith. Yet, he requires faith to resign himself and

²¹Ibid., p. 35.

²²Ibid., p. 36.

reach faith. The paradox remains. It is our problem as well. It belonged to Kierkegaard's generation:

But really is everyone in my generation capable of making the movements of faith, I wonder? Unless I am very much mistaken, this generation is rather inclined to be proud of making what they do not even believe I am capable of making, viz. incomplete movements.²³

And it was Kierkegaard's own problem:

Abraham I cannot understand, in a certain sense there is nothing I can learn from him but astonishment. If people fancy that by considering the outcome of this story they might let themselves be moved to believe, they deceive themselves and want to swindle God out of the first movement of faith, the infinite resignation. They would suck worldly wisdom out of the paradox. Perhaps one or another may succeed in that, for our age is not willing to stop with faith, with its miracle of turning water into wine, it goes further, it turns wine into water.²⁴

Kierkegaard draws out the dialectical consequences of the story in three questions to show the paradox of faith; a paradox in which a murder is transformed into a holy act of God; a paradox in which Isaac is given back to Abraham; a paradox in which faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off. It is an infinite passion.

The questions (1) is there such a thing as teleological suspension of the ethical? (2) is there such a thing as an absolute duty toward God? and (3) was Abraham ethically defensible in keeping silent about his purpose before Sarah, before Eleazer, before Isaac? cannot be dealt with here. Let me only suggest that the implied answers are all affirmative and, of course, the paradoxes are obvious in the questions themselves.

²³Ibid., p. 45.

²⁴Ibid., p. 48.

In relation to going beyond faith to love, let me only add Kierkegaard's own suggestion; no man goes beyond faith. It, therefore, remains in a man the silent partner to the act of love.²⁵

IV. Faith and Life

To return to Santiago in The Old Man and the Sea is to return to Ernest Hemingway, for the character is but an extension of the author himself. The old man is an ideal in concrete form. Santiago embraces the ultimate. The sail with its flour sack patches does not symbolize the spirit of the old man. The old man is undefeated.

It is impossible to compare and unfortunate to contrast Hemingway and his hero. They are a man and his ideal. But it is only

²⁵Mircea Eliade adds to Kierkegaard the result of his phenomenological analysis:

In this respect, the classic example of Abraham's sacrifice admirably illustrates the difference between the traditional conception of the repetition of an archetypal gesture and the new dimension, faith, acquired through religious experience. Morphologically considered, Abraham's sacrifice is nothing but the sacrifice of the first born, a frequent practice in this Paleo-Oriental world in which the Hebrews evolved down to the period of the prophets. The first child was often regarded as the child of a god; . . . And, in a certain sense, Isaac was a son of God, since he had been given to Abraham and Sarah when Sarah had long passed the age of fertility. But Isaac was given them through their faith; he was the son of the promise and of faith. His sacrifice by Abraham, although in form it resembles all the sacrifices of newborn infants in the Paleo-Semitic world, differs from them fundamentally in content. Whereas, for the entire Paleo-Semitic world, such a sacrifice, despite its religious function, was only a custom, a rite whose meaning was perfectly intelligible, in Abraham's case it is an act of faith. He does not understand why the sacrifice is demanded of him; nevertheless he performs it because it was the Lord who demanded it. By this act, which is apparently absurd, Abraham initiates a new religious experience, faith. Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), pp. 108, 109, 110.

one ideal, perhaps best symbolized by Tillich's "courage."²⁶ And even when a man spreads out his ideals for all to see, he does not, cannot, display them all; and they change. Or perhaps they are only an escape, a balance-weight in the network of living. They may be created to offset a reality that is too stark and frightening to live with. For example, suicide.

The dialectic of the brave and the cowardly is between the lion and the hyena, and Hemingway respects only his men who suffer and die in a leonine manner.

Suicide is cowardice, and belongs to the hyenic acts, eating one's own intestines with relish. It is mutely condemned in the Indian of the slit throat in "Indian Camp." As Camus says, suicide is the big question: "Judging whether life is or is not worth living amount to answering the fundamental question of philosophy." And Hemingway feels ashamed for men who answer it negatively. Perhaps it is in expiation for his own father's suicide, to which he doubtless alludes in For Whom the Bell Tolls, where Jordan remembers with shame how the gun was handed to him -- the gun with which his father had murdered himself -- and how he took it up to the lake above Red Lodge and threw it down into eight hundred feet of water.²⁷

Yet, Hemingway murders himself. An ideal is no escape.²⁸

But, we, too, are concerned with the living, and with death. Death may be Heidigger's ultimate and unique choice, the acceptance of which frees for living.²⁹ But many are not forced to face death,

²⁶"The courage to be is the ethical act in which man affirms his own being in spite of those elements of his existence which conflict with his essential self-affirmation." Tillich, The Courage To Be, p. 3.

²⁷Killinger, op. cit., p. 77.

²⁸Explored by A. E. Hotchner in Papa Hemingway (New York: Random House, 1955).

²⁹For an analysis of this concept in Heidigger see John Mac Quarrie, An Existentialist Theology (New York: Macmillan, 1955), pp. 116-125.

others or their own, in our protective society. The impact is second-hand. Life, for them, must find meaning in spite of a total relation only to the normal, the average, the American pattern.³⁰ There is no analysis of the relation of the individual to the mass, no distinction made, no reason to make a distinction; therefore, no existentialism. For the existentialist is concerned with individuality. To this we shall return, later, with Kierkegaard.

And so we have, in a sense, spun full circle. We have looked at a concept, at its idealization, at its cause, both in the image and in the author, and at a contemporary and unique analysis. Yet, what is faith? Why does it find unique manifestation in some men? And how is it passed on?

Paul Tillich's analysis gives us, at least, some language to use that is not threatened by religious barriers. It is not God that he talks about, but the ultimate. And faith is ultimate concern, correctly used only in relation to that ultimate. This is why it is impossible for the Christian to talk about faith without talking about God. And it causes him grave concern in his conversations with

³⁰"Human existence has no such simple and direct meaning or goodness as the humanistic American dream, published weekly in our home magazines and monthly in the Digest, has envisioned. A comfortable chair, a hi-fi set, a powerful car, the protection of a deoderant, a college romance, and a paying job, cannot even in combination provide meaning for our life. Existence is far too subject to threat from without and perversion from within to be defended by these feeble weapons against fate and the devil." Langdon Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth (New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 149.

other religions. In relation to some other religions faith seems to be an inappropriate word.³¹

But we can speak about ultimate concern, and what is ultimate for them, to both persons of other religions, and to our secular friends. Yet perhaps, it is most pointedly used when talking among ourselves. Somehow, God, or Christ, or the Church, do not appear ultimate or of ultimate concern to us, if our present actions relay any indications of the center or mainstay of our existence.

There is no doubt that our contemporary religious problems have historical roots. These can be examined in our continually unfolding past. In addition it may be that a key to their solution lies also in the past, not in the expressions of faith alone, but in the conjunction of expression and situation. We shall go back a long way to begin our study, back to the beginnings of history itself, back to the impact of an event, back to Exodus.

³¹H. Richard Niebhur, Radical Monotheism and Western Culture (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), p. 119.

CHAPTER II

THE IMPACT OF EXODUS

There is a river whose streams make
glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most
High.
God is in the midst of her, she shall
not be moved;
God will help her right early.
The nations rage, the kingdoms
totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. (Psalm 46:4-7)

The concomitant of new significance in an historically oriented religion is a reemphasis on particular aspects of religious heritage. This may involve a demythologizing of commonly held epic stories. It may involve the creation of myth out of historically verifiable events. It may involve the imposition of anachronisms into the account, a reshuffling of events in history. It is always highly selective and it usually employs a variety of methodologies.

Such a concept is not limited, of course, to the realm of religion. It applies to other areas as well, and may be more easily illustrated in a person's life as that life takes on new significances. For example, as I find myself engaged in an endeavor that has great meaning for me and calls from me efforts which I have no desire to restrain, I become aware of the fact that I cannot avoid the question of why this should be or how this came about. These questions come in my reflective moments as I rejoice in the pleasure

of an intense singlemindedness and in the joy of highly-compatible activity. In the first place, I feel myself extremely fortunate. Fate, or whatever other terms I may use, has been extremely kind to me. I may suggest to myself that the reason is, in part, that I had at one time been rejected by my parents, that rejection had in fact forced me to become self-reliant, and that because I became self-reliant my present good-fortune occurred. An experience initially bad has proved to be ultimately good. Thus I find myself reinterpreting a viewpoint which I had previously accepted. Or, perhaps I had dreamed of a "rags to riches" success. Success now means to me that which I am presently doing and appears to have come about out pattern similar to "rags to riches," but in real terms. Thus I make concrete a myth. Or I may convince myself that the strange occurrences which happened during my birth were symbols of destiny. Thus I mythologize an actual event. Finally, I may come to believe that the time in which I had considered doing that which I am presently doing was back in my highschool days when actually such considerations began after college. Thus I order the events of the past according to the impact of their meaning and not according to fact.

This description may seem absurd and even ludicrous, but none of it is beyond the scope of the human imagination and all of it can be verified in history. In fact, anyone who has made any statement about his past does so in the light of his present if he is attempting to convey any meaning at all. Meaning implies interpretation. To return in this analysis to the realm of religion, the Hebrews on the

point of becoming one people -- Israelites -- find themselves justifying their unique conceptions on the basis of their heritage. It was unavoidable.

One distinction needs to be made between the realm of religion and human personality. An individual may never be intensely single-minded. Religion, on the other hand, begins this way and new significance appears to be imposed in this way, as well. By this I mean that one concept or cluster of concepts comes into such focus that all others appear unimportant by comparison. And that concept "possesses" the person or persons involved. That "possession" is uniquely intense. The conceiver and the conception become almost one.

I. Explanation

When we turn to the Old Testament we discover a people in tension with their environment. The concepts which have become central to their faith are not like those of their neighbors. God, for example, is transcendent.

When we read in Psalm xix that 'the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork,' we hear a voice which mocks the beliefs of Egyptians and Babylonians. The heavens, which were to the psalmist but a witness of God's greatness, were to the Mesopotamians the very majesty of Godhead, the highest ruler, Anu. To the Egyptians the heavens signified the mystery of the divine mother through whom man was reborn. In Egypt and Mesopotamia the divine was comprehended as immanent: the gods were in nature. The Egyptians saw in the sun all that a man may know of the Creator; the Mesopotamians viewed the sun as the god Shamash, the guarantor of justice. But to the psalmist the sun was God's devoted servant who 'is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.' The God of the psalmists and the prophets was not in nature. He transcended nature -- and transcended, likewise, the realm of

mythopoeic thought. It would seem that the Hebrews, no less than the Greeks, broke with the mode of speculation which had prevailed up to their time.¹

The question is where did such a concept come from? It certainly did not arise in the Egyptian or Mesopotamian world. Nor did it exist among other nomadic tribes or in Canaan. It is more likely to be explained by expressing the possibility that it came out of reflection on an historical event; the Exodus.

When we consider a new concept in relation to the old we commonly examine the relation as a necessarily evolutionary one. That which was must have given rise to that which is. Where else could it have come from? There is no doubt that any mutation involves that which is old and that which is new. The problem is that evolution commonly considers only the old and its relation to the new. Therefore, we say it "comes out of" or "arises from." We neglect, in this fashion, the emphasis on, and the distinctiveness of, the new. In fact the new is tied to the old but it is not a direct bondage. It is indirect. The new concept is tied to the old fact, which includes the old concept.² It is not a direct bondage of concept to concept. The new idea arises out of an event which is, necessarily, distinctive.

By this it can be seen that we normally confuse or blur the

¹Henri Frankfort, et. al., Before Philosophy (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1949), p. 237.

²For a valuable examination of a parallel idea see R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 213ff.

distinction between event and environment. Events are ultimately subjective. The environment is ultimately objective. To put it another way, an event is important only in direct relation to its impact on a subject; events reflected upon become objects. Even in this sense it is a matter of stress. There is no inherent separation. To consider an event is to consider a stress on that which is dynamic. That which is dynamic arises out of that which is static which includes a previous dynamic, or rather previous dynamics which have become static. The new dynamic event gives birth to new concepts. Therefore, a new concept is strongly epigenetic. To attempt an analogy, it is similar to a mutation wherein the force for change lies not in the earlier creature (concept) but in the dynamics (events) happening in the environment.³

One further thought must be attempted if we are to make this concept clear. The "old" religious views we know. They are contained in the writings of the ancient sages.⁴ Israel's conceptions are not like them. There is nothing for example about a transcendent God in them. The closest we come is in the writings accredited to Akhenaton and even these do not transcend the myth of the king's relation to God. ". . .the king was the point of contact between the men and gods

³For a further discussion of this problem see G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against its Environment (London: S.C.M. Press, 1950), Chapter I.

⁴An excellent summary of materials in James P. Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955).

as the divine ruler vested with concern for the state."⁵ Though probably only truly expressed and understood by a "radical" minority, the transcendent-God concept is distinctively Israel's. To understand its development we must enter into the thought-pattern of ancient Israel and feel the impact of an event.

II. The Event

The impact of the Exodus upon the people of Israel cannot be denied. If there is a central event for them it is this one. A recently-enslaved people find themselves freed from a great military and political power, decisively brought together as one people in a wilderness, and assaulting an established culture in Canaan. Behind them lies bondage and despair. Before them lies freedom and a country. How can this be? Slaves seldom free themselves, and the lethargy of generations of slavery had been their inheritance. Freed slaves seldom unite, especially in the wastelands of a wilderness. A nomadic existence is all that can survive there. Further, their union went beyond the usual patriarchal patterns. It was a voluntary obedience to chosen leaders imposed on top of the patriarchal system of their fathers. Such a situation was "impossible," yet it was making possible the taking of wealth and comfort.

The views of the comfort the Hebrews desired were expressed in the terms of nomadic life; milk and honey. Yet the land offered

⁵Frankfort, op. cit., p. 100.

abundant crops, vineyards and olive groves. To conquer the land was to become enslaved to it. The freedom the wealth of the land offered meant the loss of personal freedom for the nomad. That which the Hebrew desired contained also that which he abhorred. It is with the recognition of such tension that the conquest is to be understood. It is not only the threats of giants and giant walled cities that causes them to hesitate (Numbers 13). It is in the concept that that which they conquer they must retain.

Somewhere between the escape and final settlement in Canaan the revelation was completed. Yahweh had delivered them. Moses, a runaway son of a slave, had been sent back to confront Pharaoh and to lead Yahweh's people out of Egypt. And this God, Yahweh, was the God of their father Abraham.

. . . 'A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous.

And the Egyptians treated us harshly, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. Then we cried to the Lord the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.
(Deuteronomy 26:5b-9)

Such a communal statement is only in one sense history. It is theology. It is creed. It is, finally, a confession of faith. That it arises from thought regarding history is, of course, understandable, as is, also, Joshua's review of their heritage at Shechem. (Joshua 24:2-13). The confessional character of such statements is clearly revealed in Deuteronomy 6:20-24:

"When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded you?' then, you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh, and all his household, before our eyes; and he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land which he swore to give to our fathers.

And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as at this day.

The Israelite knowledge of God, therefore, is not based on any consideration of nature, as is polytheism, but on an historical event. Even the Decalogue begins with such an affirmation, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). The new and vibrant vitality of the Hebrew people encompasses at least three distinct and interdependent concepts: (1) a transcendent God, (2) a chosen people, and (3) a covenant. Faith becomes the necessary correlative of history. And history begins in the impossibility of a people to forget a unique event. The remembrance of the Exodus spurs on the memory of other events, which adhere as traditions behind and in and around the Exodus.

Israel saw in the series of events centering in the Exodus the living matrix of her faith. The thought and reflection of later periods focused again and again on this creative period, and our present Pentateuch is a major witness to it. Just as the remaining patrons of the Old Testament, and often of the New Testament, return again and again to them as the lodestar of the great tradition.⁶

⁶James Muilenburg, "The History of the Religion of Israel," The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), I, 299.

So the revelation was completed, but in what sense was it a revelation? It was certainly not like the revelations of polytheism, though they too were concerned with the will of the gods. History, and history alone, becomes the framework of revelation for the Israelite. The true knowledge of God is to be found there. The oracles of the prophets must continually be engulfed in that which reveals God's action and purpose.

Thus while Israel possessed direct oracles from God as did the polytheist from his gods, those oracles were an integral part of a continuous unfolding of a special activity of the sole divine Reality. They were not isolated, occasional, and unrelated utterances given in response to a question for the selfish benefit of the questioner. Such utterances are, of course, known in Israel, but they did not produce the Old Testament, nor did they reveal God's nature as did the history of the divine activity. It is scarcely an accident that natural religion, when its course is not interrupted, works itself out into philosophy or mysticism. Biblical faith has always resisted complete surrender to either.⁷

III. The Transcendent God

The Hebrews arrived late upon the scene and settled in a country predated by influences from the two superior adjacent cultures. One would expect the newcomers to have assimilated alien modes of thought, since these were supported by such vast prestige. Untold immigrants from deserts and mountains had done so in the past; and many individual Hebrews did, in fact, conform to the ways of the Gentiles. But assimilation was not characteristic of Hebrew thought. On the contrary, it held out with a peculiar stubbornness and insolence against the wisdom of Israel's neighbours. It is possible to detect the reflection of Egyptian and Mesopotamian beliefs in many episodes of the Old Testament; but the overwhelming impression left by that document is one, not of derivation, but of originality.

The dominant tenet of Hebrew thought is the absolute transcendence of God. Yahweh is not in nature. Neither earth nor sun

⁷Wright, op. cit., p. 75.

nor heaven is divine; even the most potent natural phenomena are but reflections of God's greatness.⁸

God transcends nature. The myth of the creation of the cosmos, prevalent in the polytheistic cults surrounding Israel, is broken. Yahweh is elevated, enthroned; but it is not an elevation of one god over other gods. It is the enthronement of Yahweh as the only god. All of nature is his creation, dependent on him for its value. Nature is, therefore, devaluated. Nothing is holy save in its relation to God.

This is iconoclasm in its fiercest heat. There are no other gods, no divine beings who invest themselves in the kaleidoscopic varieties of nature. All that has been worshipped before by man, which includes almost every visible object and imaginative concept, is shattered at one blow. All images are condemned. All once held sacred is treated with contempt. Nothing has value before the absolute value of God.

In spite of the fact that everything has been created by God, nothing derives any sacredness from that creation. God is unconditioned. He transcends every phenomenon. Yet, every action is a sign of his omnipotence. How can such a God be spoken of? Even myth fails. And poetry bursts its analogies trying to say what God is like. A concept has transcended even the world of concepts. Yet, it too must fall back. Man must speak -- and speak of God! The Great "I am"

⁸Frankfort, op. cit., p. 241.

becomes enfolded in the myth and ritual common to man. Man has no other way to conceive of divinity. He is limited by language and act.

So the Hebrew reaches out into the thought-forms and patterns of his environment in order to communicate the ineffable. He borrows from the epic stories of polytheism much of their content and structure. He does this without question and without guilt. It is his own familiar language. It is his own familiar way of thinking. Why should these not serve a new purpose? Why should they not be used to make clear the will of Yahweh revealed in history and yet always before and beyond history?

Yet again the questions must be asked, where did such a concept come from? How was it revealed? What setting makes such a revelation possible? The agricultural communities of Mesopotamia and Egypt found their ideal in the benevolent mother-earth figure, fickle yet always full of hope and promise. The nomad finds his ideal in the austere and all-powerful father, warrior and chief. No agricultural god could transcend nature, the focal point of existence. Only in the desert could a man's mind reach beyond that which is.

. . .nomadic freedom can be bought only at a price; for whoever rejects the complexities and mutual dependences of agricultural society not only gains freedom but also loses the bond with the phenomenal world; in fact, he gains his freedom at the cost of significant form. For, wherever we find reverence for the phenomena of life and growth, we find preoccupation with the immanence of the divine and with the form of its manifestation. But in the stark solitude of the desert, where nothing changes, nothing moves (except man at his own free will), where features in the landscape are only pointers, landmarks, without significance in themselves -- there we may expect the image of God to transcend

concrete phenomena altogether. Man confronting God will not contemplate him but will hear his voice and comand, as Moses did, and the prophets, and Mohammed.⁹

Austerity here reaches its ultimate abstraction, its ultimate demand for obedience. To live is to obey -- no longer a patriarchal father -- but a transcendent God; a God who brought you out of the land of bondage and made you become a nation in the desert. Here the thought about that which happened transcends the fact of that which happened. Here Yahweh is the cause and the meaning in the events of history.

The doctrine of a transcendent God rejects the myths of polytheism. Values become abstracted from images of divinity and become attributes of the Divine. To exalt God to such a level is to lower the value of man as well as of nature. It is to set society in tension with nature. The will of Yahweh is to be realized in the action of man standing in stark contrast to nature. Revolution is to be expected. No longer is man to live in harmony with his environment. While the gods of polytheism are always involved in maintaining the status quo, the god of history jealously calls men away from the natural cycles of life. The future will complete what has been revealed in the past. Until the final eschatology man's life will be one of discord. For the Hebrew such a view is mediated by his choseness.

⁹Ibid., p. 247.

IV. The Chosen People

The Exodus, with all of its historical ramifications, has only one explanation for the Hebrew. Yahweh, the exalted God of Moses and Mount Sinai had had pity on a slave people and had "chosen" them. They were elected by him for a particular purpose. That purpose is revealed in a promise made to the great patriarchal father, Abraham.

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." (Genesis 12:1-3)

It was natural for the Hebrew to reach back into tradition and the call of Abraham as an explanation of an event -- as it will be natural later to reach all the way back to creation. It is not that the view is fatalistic. The varying traditions are too diverse for this. It is just that meaning must be added to fact for man. Some interpretation must be reached. But why this particular explanation? Because the event explains the tradition and the tradition makes clear the meaning of the event. The event is unique. It fits into no other tradition. The polytheistic world-view cannot explain it for Israel. Only their own uniqueness can explain a unique event. Only in this way can the relation of Israel to their exalted God be understood.

They were a Chosen People. But the divine choice and promise also imposed a terrible moral burden. They are the promise of blessing to all men and not to themselves alone -- though they will forget

this. The worthlessness of man and the majesty of God are here related in an unfolding drama of salvation for all nations.

Thus says God, the Lord,
 who created the heavens and
 stretched them out,
 who spread forth the earth and
 what comes from it,
 who gives breath to the people upon
 it
 and spirit to those who walk in it;
 "I am the Lord, I have called you in
 righteousness,
 I have taken you by the hand and
 kept you;
 I have given you as a covenant to the
 people,
 a light to the nations,
 to open the eyes that are blind,
 to bring out the prisoners from the
 dungeon,
 from the prison those who sit in
 darkness. (Isaiah 42:5-7)

Not cosmic phenomena, but history itself, had here become pregnant with meaning; history had become a revelation of the dynamic will of God. The human being was not merely the servant of the god as he was in Mesopotamia; nor was he placed, as in Egypt, at a preordained station in a static universe which did not need to be -- and, in fact, could not be -- questioned. Man, according to Hebrew thought, was the interpreter, the servant to God; he was even honoured with the task of bringing about a realization of God's will. Thus man was condemned to unending efforts which were doomed to fail because of his inadequacy. In the Old Testament we find man possessed of a new freedom and of a new burden of responsibility.¹⁰

At the center of Israel's faith and in spite of the burden imposed on them lay always the joyful, proclamation of their deliverance. The world's justice had passed them by, but Yahweh had heard their cry. They were not chosen because of their numbers, or because

¹⁰Ibid., p. 245.

of their righteousness, or because of the wickedness of other nations, but because God loved them and because he had sworn an oath to their fathers (Deuteronomy 7-9). The grace of God, hereby, completes the structure of meaning in history.

Rationally, the ultimate motive for the event cannot be given. It lies beyond rationality, in the mind and purpose of God. It is contained however in the concept of a blessing. After the flood a covenant is established with Noah, but the blessing to all mankind is given specifically through his descendant, Abraham. The responsibility of Israel is the equal of her privileges. The mission of Israel is to save mankind.

But such a blessing, which encompasses an amazing prophecy, implies and demands obedience for its fulfillment. The election was not totally guaranteed. It was conditional (or contingent). It could be annulled by sinful and disobedient action. When it is remembered that God was to use Israel to restore the fallen world, the actions of the people become of supreme importance. Election is not to be a source of pride but a call to responsible living. It contains a note of terror, the terror that may be realized in history.¹¹

The sordid tale told in the Old Testament reveals the conflict of national sovereignty and the will of Yahweh. In a sense, the election demanded more of the people than the people could give.

¹¹ Beautifully described in Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), Chapter 4.

Human nature is limited. But even this limitation is intended to be used to show the glory of Yahweh. Man can take no credit, ultimately, for his good deeds. In these Yahweh is revealed. But man's limitations are also the cause of his own sins. He becomes frustrated with his own inadequacy, forgets to depend on Yahweh, and sins. But there is no escaping the responsibility. Once offered and accepted, the covenant is binding down through the generations of man. Yet the election had a tremendous purifying effect upon the consciousness of the people. Why else would they reveal that their greatest heroes were also the greatest sinners?

V. The Covenant

The relation between Israel as Chosen People and Yahweh as transcendent God finds concrete expression in the covenant concept in the Old Testament. It may be the central theme of the Old Testament as a theological book. The term was probably borrowed from legal agreements or treaties between men which made community relations possible even in some polytheistic societies. This is especially true in relation to the sovereign-vassal treaties to which there appear to be direct analogies in the Old Testament.¹² But such a treaty takes on a unique usage for Israel. The term is given theological implications. It presumes a relation between Yahweh and Israel. It defines the terms of that relationship. It reveals

¹²R.A.F. MacKenzie, Faith and History in the Old Testament (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), pp. 39-45.

Yahweh's confrontation with Israel in the wilderness. It seals Israel's obligation to Yahweh. It, eventually, becomes the focal point for Israel's loyalty and self-consciousness.

The covenant is the point of remembrance for Israel, whether it is the covenant of Joshua (Joshua 24) at Shechem or the covenant of Moses (Exodus 19) at Sinai. In either case the conditions of the covenant are offered by God through his spokesman. All covenants, all contracts, have their conditions. They must be defined somehow. Sometimes these conditions are not stated, but they are assumed in such a case to be well known to the participants. Sometimes they are stated. In our case the fact that God alone grants the covenant, and that such a covenant is his grace, needs to be expressed. The people did not earn it. It is offered by Yahweh. The people consent to the agreement and thus bind themselves to the covenant. The nucleus of the covenant, expanded, becomes the Law, the Torah. In one respect Yahweh is a covenant God, a God who initiates covenants. Later covenants become reaffirmations of the original covenants (i.e. II Kings 11:17). It involves always an interpretation of the meaning of Israel's existence.

The initiative of God is, for Israel, first of all in an event. That event is, finally, accompanied by his word, "God spake all these words, saying (Exodus 20:1) ("all these words" = covenant). Israel knows that it is she who is spoken to. A response is demanded. And she knows who speaks: Yahweh. A relationship is established. The name has been spoken. God can be called upon and praised.

The covenant idea is a complex idea, and probably is a developmental one in the usage of the term. God's appearance is enough to establish the relationship and formulate the demands of a covenant. As there were many kinds of covenants in Israel, however, this perhaps "colored" the meaning of this covenant to the varying segments of the population. There is a strong cultic element in the covenant and it is usually based on some sort of blood or sacrificial rite, or on a covenantal meal (Exodus 24:11). Such a sacrifice of communion produced a union between God and the people.

Three elements are perhaps implied in the covenant: (1) it implies a relationship between God and Israel and therefore Israel's religion must be historical, (2) the covenant contains an expression of the desires of the principle partner and therefore Israel is provided with a knowledge of divine will and law, and (3) the covenant could be withdrawn if Israel fails in its duty.¹³ Plagues and troubles signified a broken covenant. However, in most cases, it could be repaired, even as it was reaffirmed at the time of the change of leadership for the people, as from Moses to Joshua. The covenant's openness to judgment and/or hope contributes, perhaps, to the openness of the Old Testament. The prophets will symbolize both elements as they call the people to a remembrance of the old covenants.

The covenant, therefore, forces Israel to view herself in relation to the panorama of history. The life of the nation is

¹³See Dennis J. McCarthy, "Covenant in the Old Testament," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly XXVII:3 (July 1965), 219.

always referred to in relation to the relativities of history.

The Biblical faith expresses a radical departure from both the high religions which can not incorporate history into the meaning of life and the low religions which can incorporate only the history of a tribe, nation or empire. . . .

The radically new dimension in this "story" of a people is that the God of this people is conceived, seemingly at the very beginning, as not their God but the God who singled them out for a special destiny. The "fact" of history by which they give meaning to their history is God's "covenant" with Israel, in which, by a special act of divine grace, this people is singled out for a special mission. The particular event which becomes the center of historical interpretation, from which history is finally interpreted backward to creation and forward to the messianic reign, is the Sinaitic covenant.¹⁴

There is no comparable usage of the covenant idea among Israel's civilized neighbors. Partly, this may be because of the dominant monarchical makeup of the nations of the day. Ultimate authority lies in the arbitrary dictatorial powers of the king. There is no agreement to which to appeal. The king's immediate word is law. But the "king" of Israel is a transcendent God, who binds himself to his people by his word in the form of a covenant voluntarily accepted. The relationship of man to man is governed by this accepted, and thus established, law. The structure of government is amphictyonic, a league of tribes organized around a central sanctuary. This league is bound by a similar compact to Yahweh. This compact developed in the wilderness and by the time of the covenant at Shechem encompassed most of the tribes.

There is of course no way of showing that the word 'covenant' was used as early as the thirteenth or twelfth centuries. But

¹⁴Reinhold Niebuhr, Faith and History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 24.

there no longer can be any doubt that the election of Israel was given concrete expression in terms of a legal compact in the wilderness period. This does not mean that all of the tribes of Israel were originally included in the amphictyony. Yet at a very early period most, if not all, of them joined the compact, accepting the Sinai tradition as normative. The covenant at Shechem, described in Josh. 24, may well have been the ceremony in which this took place.¹⁵

The keeping of the covenant meant giving up a great deal for Israel. It meant relinquishing the best the polytheistic world-view had to offer. It meant the surrender of man's harmony with nature. It was useless to find a harmony with nature when nature was devoid of divinity. Only obedience to the will of Yahweh could bring salvation. Nature remained important only in that it displayed God's creativity and power and manifested his sustenance of life. It did not reveal his will or purpose. Nature's beauty and terror, however, continued to speak poignantly to Israel; for example, in the Psalms.

In a sense, the early amphictyonic system was an attempt to continue the wilderness experience in Canaan. The covenant which permitted the people to survive exile and dissolution also made possible the attempt to build a holy community in Canaan without a king and without the loss of tribal identity. Whether it would have succeeded had the people remained obedient is a moot question, irrelevant to the facts of history.

The covenant is, then, of great significance for Israel. It involves their entire existence and purpose. It placed the law which Yahweh gave at the center of the stage where it would be always in

¹⁵Wright, op. cit., p. 62.

view. That law was rehearsed before the people on significant occasions (i.e. Deuteronomy 4). The law was not intended to be a burden. It was given that man might have life. The setting for the revelation of that law was the covenant. Therefore, Israel could rejoice in the law. Obedience to the law guaranteed the blessing inherent in the covenant.

VI. Faith and History

. . .In Judaism and Christianity history and faith are inextricably related. The way in which faith is related to events provides a major disclosure into the meaning of the religion. In the Old Testament the nature of history is grasped in terms of the nature of the God of Israel. It is interpreted from the perspective of the initiative, revelation, sovereignty, and purpose of a covenantal God. History is therefore the area of maximum interest and concern. When we try to discern the character of Israel's religion in the light of the form in which it has been transmitted to us, we are confronted first of all not with doctrines or principles or even ideas, but with the activity of God in events. It is in the relation of the covenant God with a covenant history that the Old Testament is to be understood.¹⁶

Therefore, Israel's religious literature is different from that of its environment. This historical characteristic is obvious in the early records, as in Exodus 15. Without this historical stress, Israel is of little importance. It is only when faith and event meet that the situation is changed, illuminated. Faith transforms the event and makes it the reality that the Bible describes. The event makes faith relevant. One cannot be understood without the other.

The basis of such literature is history. Even the events of

¹⁶Muilenburg, op. cit., p. 292.

the surrounding nations become part of that history. And the historical interest causes a new interpretation, a new understanding of events and their relationship; a new understanding of their meaning.

"In the Bible, as distinct from the literature of polytheism neither the garden of Eden nor the kingdom of God are separated from earth and its history; they are firmly fixed in that history."¹⁷ The events fit into the Biblical sense of time, the time of God's purpose. Israel's efforts, therefore, are to tell the story of her past in terms of God's activity.

One emphasis becomes obvious here. There can be no consideration of a dying and rising God in such a history, as there is in Canaan and Egypt. Yahweh is a living God. Such a statement becomes primary in the Israelite oath. It is a note of triumph, a challenge to Canaanite conceptions. A fundamental kinship can develop between historical man and a God who acts in history. God is frankly portrayed in an anthropomorphic manner in the Old Testament, and this without guilt. A personal relationship is stressed. In Israelite language the divine is depicted almost solely in terms of personality and society.

It is in the immediacy of a Biblical personality's own (existential) situation in history that that person "hears" God's word. There is no separation of the person and situation from that person's faith in God. In this way, seeing that history is primarily

¹⁷Wright, op. cit., p. 28.

the story of man's action, God is sovereign over history. It is not that faith is a necessary ingredient in God's action. Faith is a positive response. But God's sovereignty allows room for man's freedom.

The conception of a divine sovereignty over history which is not immediately apparent in the structures and recurrences of history establishes a dimension in which there can be meaning, though the facts of history are not related to each other in terms of natural or logical necessity. The freedom of God over and beyond the structures of life makes room for the freedom of man. All forms of naturalistic or spiritualistic determinism are broken. History is conceived meaningfully as a drama and not as a pattern of necessary relationships which could be charted scientifically. The clue to the meaning of the drama is in the whole series of revelatory events, "God's mighty acts," culminating in the climax of revelation in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. In these mighty acts the mysterious design of the sovereignty which controls historical destiny is clarified.¹⁸

Faith is an action within the realm of man's freedom.

Abraham's response is never considered as anything but Abraham's response. And it is the response of faith. Biblical history becomes interpreted from the standpoint of revelation. There is a constant reinterpretation of events as they have a bearing on faith. The "mighty acts" of God are stressed. This is not, then, history as we know it but it includes history as we know it -- in the common vein as a listing of events. But they are events with a stress! These particular events, more than others, show God's purposes. A further revelation may explore and explain other historical events in their significance as "acts of God."

¹⁸Niebhur, op. cit., p. 27.

Tradition becomes literature. History is set down in writing. Biblically, the crisis that went along with the formation of the Israelite state caused shifts in meaning to old cultic and aetiological narratives. Yet, a credo of sacred history gives a pattern to the whole for the compiler ("the Yahwist").

Let us visualize the matter roughly. He had on the one hand the old cultic credo, that canonical plan of sacred history from the patriarchs to the conquest. On the other hand he had a very great number of loose compositions, of which a few perhaps had already coalesced into smaller compositions. Most of these, however, were certainly short and without context. The astonishing creative accomplishment was that by means of the simple plan of that credo of sacred history he was successful in forging the immense mass of narrative detail into a supporting and unifying basic tradition, and indeed in such a way that the simple and manifest thought of that credo remained dominant and almost unchanged in its theological outline. It is scarcely possible to determine all the single traditions which the Yahwist incorporated into his work. His use of traditions, however, that could not simply be incorporated without further ado into the old plan of that credo of sacred history is theologically significant. The result of such inclusions and additions was naturally an overextension of the old plan and a theological diffusion of its original basis.¹⁹

It is certain that the Old Testament, especially the Pentateuch, did not originate as an historical work. Its source is in the successive coalescing of sacred traditions based on particular historical events. Like all human history it is mysterious and ambiguous when judged from the outside. It is given a unified meaning when it is declared that God used a people as his instrument so that in it "all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Such a self-testimony cannot be proved as valid. It can only

¹⁹Gerhard von Rad, Genesis, A Commentary (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 19.

be accepted in faith. History is related for the sake of its testimony. It is a witness to God's actions accepted by faith.²⁰ Herein is faith and history united; an event and its significance, the interpretation of an action as an act of God.

VII. The Patriarchs

There are at least two major extensions to our story that reach back beyond the Exodus, as well as other smaller but perhaps not less important additions.²¹ These are the materials of the patriarchal history and the inclusion of the primeval history, especially the creation story.

G. Ernest Wright asserts that the patriarchal stories cannot be treated as straightforward history. They are sagas, which were passed on orally for centuries before they were written down.²² Archeology has shed a great deal of light on the type of people these were, if not on the Biblical individuals themselves.

According to Biblical tradition, the patriarchs were Aramaeans living in the northern Tigris-Euphrates valley, probably around Haran. The word "Hapiru," though representing a class -- as foreigner -- probably refers indirectly to the Hebrews. Some are probably mercenaries. Several lines of evidence suggest, therefore, that the

²⁰Martin Noth, The History of Israel (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), p. 42ff.

²¹As for example the inclusion of the Sinai Tradition. See Rad, op. cit., p. 20ff.

²²G. Ernest Wright, Biblical Archeology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 21.

patriarchs were part of a nomadic invading people moving south into Palestine during a time of almost universal turbulence among the peoples of the Near East.

We are reminded immediately of the story of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and also immediately face the problem of the delayed fulfillment of a promise. "The promise of land appears throughout the patriarchal stories like a red thread."²³ This becomes the inner direction of the later narrative compilation. It would be expected that the promise given in Genesis 12:7 implied an immediate possession. It did not suggest the delay until the conquest under Joshua. The first promise appears to be broken. The patriarchal period becomes a strange wandering, a temporary situation with a mysterious portent, a period to be associated only with the promise. The conquest and fulfillment will come later.

Further, the traditions involving the patriarchs refer only to a few cultic groups. They had only a small regional validity. This will be broadened to include all Israel, at least twelve tribes. It was a necessity in the developing political unity that some unity be made of the various and variegated traditions. There must be the attempt at a single theology. It was an impossible task.

Yet it is important not to exaggerate the situation as we meet it in the Pentateuch. It is obvious that the literary materials are of great complexity, that various sources have gone to their making, and that the point of view of the compilers has left its stamp upon their compilations. If we do not distinguish between the work and thought of the compilers and their sources we are in

²³Rad, op. cit., p. 21.

danger of throwing the history into confusion. In actuality we are confronted with a number of strata from different times, and these times are much later than the patriarchal age. . . .It is not too much to say, however, that all the sources, late as well as early, preserve an appreciable amount of ancient and trustworthy tradition.²⁴

Only against the background of Canaanite religion can the religion of the patriarchs be understood. There are no sharp differences between them. The overlap and slow developmental change cause great difficulties in our Scriptural interpretation. There is much that is similar, if not the same. The pre-Mosaic character of Hebrew religion is in fundamental harmony with that of the Canaanite milieu. Yet, of course, there is a difference. The Canaanites were agriculturalists interested in nature and the fertility of the soil. The Hebrews were nomads with only a secondary interest in nature.

In the relation of divinity to the patriarchal personalities and their names, we can see that these gods were tribal deities which became coalesced into one in the revelation of Moses. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, become the God of Israel, regardless of which way that "becoming" is understood. Realizing that the beginnings of any religion remains relatively obscure, the time, the circumstances, the process, are all only loosely understood. Late in the beginnings of the development of Israel's religion, Elijah will be fighting battles arising from the "definition" of a religion. Yahweh is not Baal.

The political and geographical situation at the time of the

²⁴Muilenburg, op. cit., p. 296.

Patriarchs is one of confusion. Even Egypt can be seen in close connection with Syria-Palestine, a fact that makes the visit of Abraham to Egypt quite credible. Such a situation also speaks for confusion and variety in religion. As little as we know about the Canaanites, we can assume great similarity between the God of the Fathers and the head of the Canaanite pantheon, El.

. . . 'The God of the Fathers' was identified with Yahweh (Ex. 3); he became Israel's God, and Israel by free choice became his people. The proper name of the patriarchal deity is not known with certainty, but one of his titles has been preserved. It is 'Shaddai' (Gen. 17.1; Ex. 6.3), a Mesopotamian word meaning 'mountaineer', and thus pointing to the might and awe-inspiring majesty of the deity. Abraham's worship of El Elyon ('God Most High') in Jerusalem (Gen. 14) shows that the patriarchs were not monotheists, however. El was the head of both the 'Amorite' and later Canaanite pantheon of deities, and we have no reason to suppose that he is anything else in the original tradition behind Gen. 14.²⁵

VIII. Creation

The Hebrews were a real people in a real situation. Overwhelmed by their distinctive heritage, they felt themselves to be a unique and a chosen people. The concomitant of this concept of unique chosenness is the concept of a transcendent God. The God of their fathers becomes the God of creation elevated, enthroned above every created being. The God of Exodus, the God of Abraham, and the God of Creation become, are, identical. In one sense, the creation story is the ultimate point of a line tracing the lineage of a chosen people back to their Creator. In another sense, it is the ultimate

²⁵Wright, Biblical Archeology, op. cit., p. 24.

elevation of their God.

It would be foolish to presume that there is a simple progression in this "elevation" concept. We cannot just assume that, first, the Hebrews considered their savior as the God of Moses, of Sinai or Horeb; then as the God of their father's Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then as the God of Creation. This may be a natural inclination for a contemporary historian who, dealing with profound meanings, attempts to place the crucial moment into a wider and wider setting. It is natural in placing meaning to go back further and further into history and, finally, into pre-history. But it is, usually, a more sporadic endeavor and not a consistent effort on the part of the not-so-scientific, ordinary person.

Two types of creation stories are available for our use in polytheism, as for example, at Ugarit. One is creation of the El type, a theogony in which one god is the parent of other gods. The other is creation of the Baal type, in which order is brought out of chaos. Hebrew thought more easily adopted the content and structure of the Baal type.²⁶ The procedure is usually, (1) conflict, (2) kingship, (3) order, (4) temple building, and (5) banquet.²⁷ In creation we are concerned with the first two; conflict and kingship (or elevation).

²⁶Loren R. Fisher, "From Chaos to Cosmos," Encounter XXVI:2 (Spring 1965).

²⁷Loren R. Fisher, "Creation at Ugarit and in the Old Testament," Vetus Testamentum XV:3 (July 1965).

The Creator-God of Genesis 1 is not a god-fighter as in a polytheistic view. There are no gods to fight, whose admission of subjection would elevate the Creator-God. Instead God subjects his own creation. It is an aspect of creation, revealed in the dependence of the created continually on the creator. In this sense, all nature worships God. There can be no revolt. The only creature capable of disobedience is man.

Man is created as servant even in the Akkadian Myths. Marduk says, for example, "He shall be charged with the service of the gods that they may be at ease."²⁸ Man as wholly man is man as servant. Even in the Old Testament this is so, though his care is directed to God's creation and not to the gods (of which there are none). He is put in the garden of Eden "to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). The situation has not changed. Man still must serve the earth if only to survive.

Man still feels his subjectedness. It is revealed in the Old Testament in the enthronement Psalms (Psalms 93, 95, 96, etc.). The note is the same, "The Lord reigns" or "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods." Creation and Kingship are often tied together as in Psalm 149:2, "Let Israel be glad in his Maker, let the sons of Zion rejoice in their King." Man's feelings, if he recognizes God at all, have not changed.

A final question needs to be raised. Was the elevation of God

²⁸Pritchard, op. cit., p. 68.

activated by man or did man merely become aware of or recognize an elevated God? Certainly, man is not capable, in the Hebrew point of view of elevating a God. It is not even considered. Then man became aware of a transcendent being. Is this possible? Apparently, yes, in spite of the complications and in spite of such an irrational idea. The desert may have provided the setting, but God as person is revealed by his word. He speaks, and man responds.²⁹

In order to explain that which appears unexplainable, the Hebrew "borrowed" (this word is unfair because the thought-forms were his own as well) concepts and patterns common to his neighbors. His God was not close at hand, i.e. in nature, but transcendent. Yet, he was with his people. How can this paradox be explained?

The best course to follow is the one that is followed. God is the God of this place; mountain, tabernacle, temple, etc. That God is the same God as the God of our fathers, from Ur of the Chaldeans to Egypt. That God is the same God, when the argument reaches its climax, as the God of creation, above creation and above gods. The passage is easier to follow when moving from segment to segment than it is when attempting to integrate or interrelate the whole. It is all, ultimately, a statement of faith.

In dealing with such a situation as that in which the Hebrew was involved we find ourselves prone to reject the possibility of any nation being special or unique. We leap upon the limitations of

²⁹For the word as "bridge" see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Creation and Fall (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 22ff.

language in order to show the similarities of the Hebrew and his milieu. Yet, apparently, only the possibility of his uniqueness explains his situation. It is not uniqueness in the ordinary sense, in the manner in which it can be shown that every person or nation is unique. Rather, it was a strange self-consciousness, a sense of being "called" by God to fill a unique role in history that characterized his uniqueness. Further, this uniqueness is felt to be originally and ultimately for our benefit; in him "all the families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:3) Such subjective awareness of "exceptional difference" cannot, therefore, be entirely rejected.

Such uniqueness is hazardous. It easily leads to pride and a failure to live up to responsibilities. The final danger is that the phrase, "the Israel of God," will become replaced by the phrase, "the God of Israel." Such a reversal Yahweh would not and did not tolerate.

The covenant is the point of remembrance for Israel. It focuses on an interpretation of the meaning of existence. It focuses on the action of God in history which is also, in a sense, the beginning of history. Faith is a positive response to that action. It is a response within the realm of man's freedom. History, related for the sake of its testimony, becomes also the area of reinterpretation. Man, the servant, reacts meaningfully to God's revelations.

Yet man forgets. The failure to emphasize continually the fact that Yahweh is a living God who refuses to be forgotten and who will not allow his covenantal demands to be rejected, once accepted,

sets the stage for the message of the prophets. To their hazardous situation we now turn. The concepts expressed by the prophets (specifically Amos) display the danger of a neglected heritage and the risk of a false interpretation of the relationship of a people with the one, transcendent God.

CHAPTER III

THE CULT AND THE CALL

And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the tent, and called Aaron and Miriam; and they both came forward. And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision, I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in dark speech; and he beholds the form of the Lord." (Numbers 12:5-8b)

The kingdom of Israel, instigated by Saul and Samuel, was made a reality by David and reached its peak under Solomon; only to collapse again into its natural divisions after Solomon's death. From that time until the eventual conquest by major powers to the north-east, Israel existed, or rather coexisted, as the separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel. It was not a happy coexistence. Israel sat on the trade routes which were also the routes of conquest from the north or south. Judah sat actually "between" the trade routes and therefore could remain relatively untouched. The only action took place on its periphery. It was not allowed to remain isolated, however. Israel, Syria, Egypt and the other smaller kingdoms intrigued to involve Judah in any insurrection against each other and against the Assyrian-Babylonian threat.¹

This confused and confusing period of conflict, intrigue and varying levels of prosperity, marked the beginnings of the period of

¹A unique approach to the material in Martin Noth, The History of Israel (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 164-356.

the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The period lasted for approximately four hundred years (750-350 B.C.). This period is significant in many respects in world history. It marks, for example, the rise of several of the world's great religions, such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and, perhaps, Zoroastrianism. It is also the period of the development of Greek philosophy, from the early Ionians to Aristotle. In world politics, tradition ascribes the foundation of Rome to this period, as well as the beginnings of Greece. Civilization is divided between Mesopotamia and Egypt, the latter of which was in a long period of decline. Persia later arose from its latent state in the wild mountains north of Assyria, while Greece passed her peak, and Rome showed signs of becoming the greatest power in the world. In this vast melting-pot of world history no ingredient was of more importance than that of the Hebrew prophets.²

Yet, in fact, it is not the voice of prophecy in general that is heard in the Scriptures, but the voices of individual men. It is, then, not the cultic prophet, as such, that is the stress of concern but a few strange, incredible, tangential figures, aloof and tragically solitary. This is not to deny the validity or the value of the cultic prophets. Some of these individualistic figures probably were intimately related to the cult and cultic prophecy, as well. And all of them probably had some relation to the cultic prophets. It is only that their's is a special call, a call that

²Based on W.O.E. Oesterley and T.H. Robinson, An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament (New York: World, 1958), pp.221-224.

often set them in opposition to the cult of prophets.

This is a unique and still relatively unknown story in regard to the relation between the "cultic" prophet and the "called" prophet -- who may be a "cultic" prophet, as well. It is dealt with briefly here in order to move to an individual stress -- that of Amos -- out of the "group" setting so far considered.

I. Sons Of The Prophets

The prophets of Israel were men who acted as spokesmen for Yahweh. Their oracles were directed primarily to the present situation, though they frequently contained overtones of a more universal and historical nature. While it is true that prophecy as such is not uniquely limited to Israel, it is also true that in Israel we find prophets par excellence.³ Prophecy, in this sense then, can be limited to the messages of the prophets in the Old Testament. Without such messages there is no prophecy. It doesn't exist, except that a proclamation of Yahweh be voiced in a particular, historical situation. The circumstances form the framework for the message.

Fundamentally, Moses is the key figure in Old Testament prophecy.⁴ Numbers 12:6-8 is the most concentrated form of prophecy

³R.B.Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: Macmillan, 1957), p. 1.

⁴Key portions of this section "Sons of the Prophets" as well as the bulk of material in the following section "Prophetic Functions" is based on the lectures given by Dr. Rolf Knierim in the summer of 1966 at the School of Theology, Claremont, California.

known. There are no mediating means. Moses speaks directly to Yahweh face to face and receives Yahweh's message in clear language. Other communications need to be interpreted, as tradition will stand between any other prophet and the people. Therefore, we have here a concentrated definition of Israel's religion. It is a prophetic religion throughout. Moses represents this religion in its highest criterion.

The term "sons of the prophets" in the Old Testament is easily misunderstood. It refers to persons who are supposed to be endowed with the spirit of the prophets. There is no family relation implied. It denotes the body of prophets as a whole, who represent perhaps the earliest stage in the history of prophecy, as such, in Israel.⁵ Saul met a company of "sons of the prophets" on the road prophesying as they went along (I Samuel 10:5). When David fled from Saul at one time he was found amidst a company of such men with Samuel at their head (I Samuel 19:20). Elisha had dealings with the "sons of the prophets" (II Kings 6:1-7), and had been supported by "sons of the prophets" at Elijah's death both at Bethel and at Jericho (II Kings 2:3-5). Such prophetic cults or guilds were apparently common in Israel. The functions of such men which designate them as "sons of the prophets" as well as that of the so-called "great" prophets will be dealt with in the next section.

⁵J.M.P. Smith, The Prophets and Their Times (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1941), p. 1.

Groups of prophets played an important role in the social life of Israel.⁶ They were usually recognizable by their dress and general behavior. Specifically, their "prophecy" is their message. They are men possessed by Yahweh. His presence is noted by their action. This action is probably ecstatic in its manifestation. The sight of such a prophet reminds the people of Yahweh. There may have been a distinguishing mark on the prophet's forehead as a sign of their dedication to Yahweh. There is little doubt that they were both respected and feared. They intervened in morals and politics as well as in religion, though, of course, these cannot be entirely separated for Israel.

The prophet in general is looked on in the Old Testament as one who declares the will of Yahweh to the people. This is clarified in Aaron's relation to Moses as explained in Exodus 7:1, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'See, I make you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.'"

II. Prophetic Types

The beginnings of prophecy in Israel remain relatively obscure. There are a number of prophetic functions which may also be considered as sources or roots of prophecy. It is generally accepted that there is a continuity from these historical roots to the later prophets. Such a concept must bear in mind the total impact of history from the

⁶J. Lindblom, Prophecy in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), p. 65.

Exodus and Conquest to the establishment of a kingdom in Israel. The roots and typology lie scattered in this heritage. A consideration of one involves a consideration of the other. A prophetic type cannot be understood apart from its historical setting.

There are, perhaps, six major aspects contained in the word prophet (nebi).⁷ Initially, a prophet is an announcer of Yahweh. If the history of prophecy begins with Moses, then we have a distinctive historical motif. In a crisis situation a speaker appears to proclaim a message of Yahweh for this situation. Thus Moses proclaims the Exodus in the name of Yahweh. This is a proclamation of deliverance and freedom. Here is a clear prophetic phenomenon, yet we have no ecstatic or cultic elements involved. It is a proclamation only. The fulfillment of its purpose is its guarantee.

But Moses is not only a announcer of Yahweh, he is an inspired person and, therefore, a charismatic. Here we have a second aspect of prophecy. There is a direct line between prophecy and the Hebrew charismatics. The earlier Biblical personalities, for example the Judges, as well as the later prophets understood themselves to be charismatics-inspired men of Yahweh. Even Deborah is considered a prophetess, as well as a judge (Judges 4:4). She is chosen by Yahweh as messenger and leader of the people in a particular situation.

The seer, a third aspect of prophecy, represents both a specific class of mediators, as well as a specific type of activity.

⁷See footnote 5 page 57.

In this sense Samuel is a seer. Saul approaches him originally as a seer, while seeking his father's asses (I Samuel 9:5ff). A seer can be approached because he is always a seer. He has visions and auditions and, for a fee, can discern almost anything. An ideal description is found, in regard to Balaam, in Numbers 24:3,4. The means used to conjure up the requested "sign" or answer is a moot question. It is the will of Yahweh that is revealed.

A discussion of ecstasy, the fourth aspect of prophecy, returns any discussion to Samuel's time and to the discussion of the "sons of the prophets." Any prior roots of ecstasy among the Hebrews is doubtful.⁸ Ecstasy is similar to inspiration, but it is a more concentrated and potentially-dangerous concept.

A clear distinction cannot be drawn between inspiration and ecstasy. Inspiration is the more general term. Inspiration appears as mental excitement and exaltation in general. I prefer to use the term ecstasy when the inspiration has grown so strong that the inspired person has lost full control of himself. The normal current of mental life is interrupted. The ordinary mental faculties, and sometimes the physical powers, are put out of function. Ecstasy is a psycho-physical detachment, arising from a one-sided concentration on a dominant fact. Ecstasy is a sort of psychic paralysis except for the one point at which a dominating idea or complex of ideas, or an intense feeling, powerfully captivates the attention. To be inspired is to be filled with and seized by a new surprising mental content. Ecstasy is a similar state of mind intensified to such an extent that the normal psychic, or even physical, powers are thrown out of gear.⁹

⁸On "Ecstasy and Other Extraordinary Phenomena" see: Lindblom, op. cit., pp. 47-65.

⁹Lindblom, op. cit., p. 35.

It is in such a state of mind that the prophetic personalities receive their revelation, of which there are various kinds. In ecstasy the prophet reaches beyond the ordinary, to the realms of Yahweh. If such an emphasis comes actually from Canaan (or before Canaan from the Hittites¹⁰) the dangers to the Hebrew religion become obvious. Of course, any dealings with Yahweh are dangerous, regardless of the means of communication.

The fifth aspect is that of royal prophecy, as for example, Nathan's (II Samuel 7ff). Here a prophet is directly connected with the royal court of David. Yet, he does not represent only the court but also the old amphictyony against which the kingship is an offense. In fact, he represents both. Both had been instigated by Yahweh. Both were under his control. The question is in regard to their relationship. In a sense, in the developing kingship, Yahweh had been replaced by human planning. Therefore, we have the prophetic intervention and clashes between the prophet and the king. Such a prophet preserves Yahweh's rights under the covenant theology against the privileges of the king. He limits the king, thereby, to the old covenant law and suggests new futures of Yahweh's people. Originally, it must be remembered, Yahweh founded the dynasty. His intention was not to lead the people away from Yahweh.

The final concept is that of the "man of God." This phrase, as in I Samuel 9:6, suggests the pureness of a man in whom divine power

¹⁰Theodore H. Robinson, Prophecy and the Prophets in Ancient Israel (London: Duckworth, 1923), p. 35.

is present. "All that he says comes true." Such a prophet could bring good fortune, as Elisha to the Shunammite woman (II Kings 8:1ff), or judgment, as Elijah to the woman of Zarephath (I Kings 17:18). Yet, there is continually the promise of life in spite of guilt.

The prophets as "men of God" were sacred and not to be insulted or injured. It was dangerous to offend them (I Kings 20:35f, II Kings 2:23f). Prophecy, by the time of the classical prophets, is deeply rooted in the aspects listed above. None are totally inclusive or exclusive in any particular prophet. Yet, a prophet, conscious of his special call, feels forced to perform actions or proclaim ideas rooted in such a heritage. He must go and say or do as he has been commanded.

III. The Cult And The Prophets

With the conquest of Canaan, regardless of which particular process is recognized by the use of that term, there develops at least two concepts of religion in Israel.¹¹ This can be explained by the overlapping of a nomadic existence and its ideals with that of a settled agricultural society. In essence, there is a vocal element, which will be later emphatically stated by some of the prophets, that attempts to retain the "pure" religion of the nomadic existence. From what we know about the religion of Israel in the desert, it is

¹¹Ibid., see "The Two Religions of Israel," pp. 12-27.

difficult to analyze the particular aspects necessarily stressed, but there is a strong emphasis on ethics. On the other hand, the syncretistic elements, primarily in relation to the cities and the "civilized" areas not really taken over and certainly not destroyed by the Hebrews, form what may be considered as the other end of the religious spectrum in Israel. A third element, the royal, will arise at the establishment of the kingdom of Israel.

Where the nomadic element is composed of a relative simplicity of worship, little ritual, and even less religious paraphernalia, high sexual morality and little private property, the agriculturally syncretistic religious element will stress a set, seasonal format of worship, fertility practice including religious prostitution, much ritual, and various festival arrangements related to the agricultural patterns. The Baal-Yahweh conflict becomes especially apparent in Elijah's time (see I Kings 17ff). The sanctification of Canaanite high places and groves shows in part the developing religious patterns, which continue to vary throughout Israel.

The royal element, which brings in more external religious complexities, highlights what has already happened. The central sanctuary is an attempt in part to deal with the entire religious situation. Simplicity disappears. In a sense, formalism reigns. Yet, the influence throughout the kingdom varies and, for some, becomes only another syncretistic element. Worship at the central sanctuary itself was soon in need of reform. Solomon's actions, for example, are no help. And, by the time of Josiah (II Kings 22,23) new

reforms reach out into the kingdom again, involving syncretistic elements in the temple and throughout Israel.

In this changing situation both priest and prophet are involved. It would be wrong to assume that all priests are consistently in error and that all prophets are champions of true worship. It is a much more complex situation than this. Nor was there always tension between them.

. . . The two bodies of men who had in charge the guidance of the religious life of their nation held much in common. They were equally convinced of the necessity to keep Israel loyal to the God who had revealed His nature and His will to His people. They were also convinced of the need for some forms of worship which both expressed and maintained the relation between the nation and this God. They may, further, have realized that the cult, as it was actually celebrated, was not fulfilling its work, and that some change was needed to adapt it to its purpose. But the part which prophet and priest had to fulfill in connection with this change was very different. The prophet must enunciate, as clearly as he might, the great convictions which were essential to the religion of Israel. He must also have the courage and the insight to declare that the rituals among which he himself had been reared were in many respects in hopeless contradiction to the character of Him in whose honour they were celebrated. The priests part in the matter was more practical and humdrum. He could not fail to realize how deeply the cult had twined itself into the life of the nation, and that it is always easier to change the thoughts of men than their habits. He must be patient with the slow-moving minds of peasants, and dare not, by too large and sudden changes, lose the confidence of men whom he must seek to lead into new ways. The difference between priest and prophet was one of tempo rather than of principle.¹²

The functions of prophet and priest were different. It is likely that at all Yahweh sanctuaries, and especially at Jerusalem, both prophet and priest served Yahweh. The writing-prophets' sharp

¹²Adam C. Welch, Prophet and Priest in Old Israel (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953), p. 76.

protests did not condemn the cultic function, but the misuse of it. Here there is a clear recognition of the role of cultic prophets at the sanctuaries throughout Israel, and they did not lose their authority until after the fall of Jerusalem.¹³

The prophets influenced some of the reform movements. The elimination of human sacrifice was probably the objective of one of these, and the story of Abraham and Isaac may have had a direct bearing on this.¹⁴ Religious prostitution was condemned and eliminated from the syncretistic milieu where it probably had a part in Israel's worship.¹⁵ New meanings were given to various of the rites, as well as changes in form. Passover, for example, changed from a ceremony of fear in regard to the "destroyer" in the homes of Israel to one of reverence of Yahweh, when it was transferred to the Temple.¹⁶

The task of the religious leaders, both prophet and priest, was to represent Yahweh in the traditional forms which were familiar to the people of the land. Some of these forms were, of course, originally, Canaanite. The problems associated with such efforts is related in the books of the Kings and of the Prophets. Always the heritage of Israel was used as the touch-stone of reform, especially that of the "pure" nomadic religion of the desert. This is accented in the prophetic books.¹⁷

¹³See H. H. Rowley, The Old Testament and Modern Study (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 122ff.

¹⁴Welch, op. cit., p. 80. ¹⁵Ibid., p. 82ff.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 87ff. ¹⁷See Scott, op. cit., pp. 180-203.

IV. The Individual Prophet

There is a close link between the writing prophets, who may also be called the reform or opposition prophets, and the cult. Such a linkage varies from prophet to prophet. Some are more closely associated than others. In such a light, however, it becomes obvious that cultic customs and conceptions influence them as well.¹⁸

The prophets whose messages we have in the Old Testament constitute only a small minority of the active prophets in Israel. The presence of prophets was regarded as a privilege and a blessing in Israel. Their disappearance was considered a punishment and a judgment.¹⁹ The authority of the prophets stems from the understanding that they were bearers of divine word.

The individual "called" prophet in the Old Testament was directly connected to the divine word which he bore. He was a spokesman for Yahweh. Individual prophets often justified their existence and their message by their call. Often they were against the prophets of peace in divided Israel. It is not that the prophets of peace, often cultic or royal prophets, were false prophets; it is that a particular prophecy is false. They may have been deceived by Yahweh, as in I Kings 22. The later prophets of Israel stand out because of their opposition to the expected message of prophecy in the light of the people's understanding of their election and of the promises given

¹⁸Rowley, op. cit., p. 117.

¹⁹Lindblom, op. cit., p. 203.

to their fathers. "The task of true prophet was to intercede for the people and to bring them to repentance and righteousness in order to save them from the wrath of Yahweh and secure their existence."²⁰ The people, secure in their misconception of the promises of Yahweh, did not expect to feel his wrath.

The "called" prophet saw and heard more than was seen or heard by the common man. Micaiah and Isaiah saw Yahweh sitting upon a throne. They witnessed events in the heavenly council. Amos saw hidden meanings in baskets of summer fruit or a swarm of locusts. Hosea discovered great meaning in his strange marriage, as did Jeremiah in the twig of an ordinary almond tree and Ezekiel in a storm.

In noting that the prophet saw unusual significance in common things and events, we do not wish to deny that their experiences were governed by God or that they were in the best sense supernatural. But we should understand that the ancient Hebrew did not make so sharp a distinction as we make between the natural and the supernatural. To him his entire life and his whole world were supernatural in that they were governed by God. He believed that God had customary and usual ways of dealing with his world and with life, but he did not deny that God could and frequently did deal with man in unusual and extraordinary ways. The prophets were men with whom God dealt in an unusual manner, manifesting himself to a degree not vouchsafed to ordinary mortals. One of his ways of expressing himself to the prophets was to open their eyes and minds to see and understand significance and meaning in ordinary things.²¹

The prophet was the medium of God's word to men. That word may be considered as an existing object, as in Hosea 6:5 "Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth

²⁰Ibid., p. 212.

²¹J. Philip Hyatt, Prophetic Religion (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1957), p. 46.

and in Isaiah 9:8, "The Lord has sent a word against Jacob, and it will light upon Israel." In any case, there is a direct connection between the word and the prophet's mouth. Isaiah's lips are purified (Isaiah 6:6) and Jeremiah receives God's words in his mouth (Jeremiah 1:9).

The "called" prophet must pronounce the word of Yahweh regardless of how he expects that it will be received. No prophet probably ever considered himself a success in the ordinary sense. Jeremiah's entire prophetic existence was filled with a sense of frustration at not being listened to. He prophesied because he was compelled. It was the same with the others. The particular call of each individual prophet issued in a different reaction to that call and to the responsibilities involved.

Yet, it is not only the prophets of peace against which these "called" prophets stand, but also against various aspects of the political and social abuses, and against the conception of history normally considered. Yahweh still held Israel as central, but it was as the center of his judgment and not the center of his blessing. Yet, it was both. But the people could not understand such an attitude. They were willingly deceived and deceived themselves. At the same time when Israel was coming to recognize a "world-history" it was forced by the prophets to see that "world-history" was being used as an instrument of God's judgment.

. . . It was God's purpose to execute an annihilating judgment on the present condition of his people because of its unforgivable faithlessness and disobedience. The prophets dared to declare

that God was using the whole history of the ancient Orient for this one purpose. For this end the mighty king of Assyria became an instrument in the hand of God (Isa. x, 5), and later on the Neo-Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar became a 'servant' of God (Jer. xxvii, 6) and the Persian king Cyrus an 'anointed' of God (Isa. xiv, 1). They dared to declare that, despite its historical insignificance, Israel was nevertheless the centre of world history in the events of their age, not, it is true, in the role of a leading power, but as the object of God's judgement, of a God who is the Lord of the world, not the visible pivot of historical movements but the secret centre of events. The 'unhistorical' was thus working in the midst of human history.²²

The prophets of the Old Testament recorded the will of Yahweh. A proof of their prophecy lies in the unfolding of history. As Micaiah said to Ahab "If you return in peace, the Lord has not spoken by me" (I Kings 22:28).

V. Amos

In the sanctuary of the king at Bethel a strange and fearless prophet from Tekoa in Southern Judah proclaimed the death of Jereboam, king of Israel, and the coming exile of the people. He was confronted by the priest of the temple, Amaziah. The proclamation bordered on treason. Amos was warned to flee for his life.

But this was no ordinary, professional prophet, nor one to be easily intimidated or coerced. This was a prophet of an altogether new type, one with an authority and a message such as no prophet before him had enjoyed. To Amaziah's condescending sarcasm Amos replied with a direct and triumphant affirmation of his prophetic commission at the hands of Yahweh himself, so that his authority surpassed that of even the chief priest, and the Deity's command to speak outweighed completely Amaziah's command to desist from speaking; and then, as evidence thereof, he denounced Amaziah to his face and, in the hearing of the assembled

²²Noth, op. cit., p. 256.

throng, announced the priest's personal fate.²³

The personality of Amos ushered in the age of classical prophecy in Israel and Judah. These men, as distinct from their forebearers, were set apart and lonely. They had a unique knowledge of Yahweh and of his designs on Israel. They were deeply rooted in the traditions of the nation and made tradition speak to their day. There was an application of this old tradition which suggested that tradition was law. The new note of their message summoned Israel, itself, before the judgment seat of Yahweh and plumbed the depths of history.²⁴

Amos was probably unknown in Israel. His entire message may have been spoken only briefly, at Bethel.²⁵ The dramatic scene portrayed in Amos 7:10-17 is his introduction and his farewell. The mark that brief scene left, however, is eternal. One man under Yahweh's persuasion confronts Israel, its priest and its king. He pronounces doom. "Prepare to meet your God, O Israel" (Amos 5:12) is his central word. God has conspired to destroy Israel.

A prophet may come from any background. There are no prerequisites for Hebrew prophecy. Amos was a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees (Amos 7:14). The Lord took him from his occupation

²³Julian Morgenstern, Amos Studies (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1941), p. 176.

²⁴Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), II, 176-187.

²⁵It is Morgenstern's view that Amos spoke once for one half hour at the New Year's Festival.

and sent him to prophecy to Israel. He could not do otherwise. In his ecstasy, he saw Israel being eaten up by locusts and he plead with Yahweh for the people. He saw judgment by fire and he pleaded for his people. Then, he saw a plumbline which God set in the midst of the people and he heard God's judgment passed:

"Behold, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass by them;
the high places of Isaac shall be
made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall
be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house
of Jerobo'am with the sword." (Amos 7:8,9)

Visions of a basket of summer fruit and of the Lord standing beside the altar confirm the judgment (Amos 8,9). Israel would be totally devastated. The Old Testament God of Grace has become the God of wrath and judgment. Not even the grace of a remnant is guaranteed. (Amos 3:12)

Under the concepts of election and a remnant, such a view fell on hostile ears. Why should a man proclaim such a view? Certainly he knew what its reception would be. Amaziah symbolizes the attitude of the people. But Amos was no ordinary prophet. Yahweh had revealed his secrets to his prophet. "The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophecy?" (Amos 3:8b)

At a time when Israel was ripe in external brilliance but rotten internally two other groups, the Nazirites and the Rechabites, were preaching social surgery; a condemnation and an escape from the higher civilization of the agricultural and civic community.²⁶

²⁶Robinson, op. cit., p. 67f.

Amos proclaimed, primarily, a judgment in the light of the law which had been broken. Amos proclaimed, also the possibility of a return to the faith of old time, a faith not contaminated with Canaanite syncretism, the faith of Yahweh which traced back in history to Moses. Let men seek Yahweh and establish true justice. Otherwise, they will perish. A literal religiousity was not enough. A spiritual, moral, and just life was essential.

Religiosity was no substitute for the fulfillment of Yahweh's moral demands; unaccompanied by righteousness sacrifice was merely loathsome. Men believed in the approach of a Day of Yahweh, in which Israel should triumph over all her enemies. Amos accepted the belief, but insisted that Yahweh would come, not to vindicate indiscriminately His own nation, but to assert the claims of His moral character on all who had denied them in practice. His message was primarily a "cry for justice."²⁷

For the first time, the aspect of world history appeared in prophecy. Judgments were pronounced against other nations (Amos 1,2). They would be destroyed and for cause. Yahweh inaugerates the movements of nations. Yahweh used them for his purposes. Yahweh brought them to an historic end. These nations are politically and theologically damned. Yahweh will not stop his wrath. He will no longer forgive. At Yahweh's command death and destruction begin. He is responsible. He is the cause.

Amos combines theophanies and historical events. For him, they are interrelated. It is all God's action. An epoch is ending. The covenants of men will be useless. They do not live as neighbors. Even Israel does not face up to the revelations of Yahweh in its

²⁷Oesterley, op. cit., p. 368.

history. The covenant is broken. It cannot be restored. The community is fragmented and disloyal. Injustice results. God's judgment is already operative. Oppression is a sign of a sentence that has already been passed. There is no salvation anywhere. Even the cult is rejected.

The people see only the festivals and rejoice in their blessings. The prophet sees the situation in relation to the people of God, and despairs for Israel.

VI. The Day Of Yahweh

Israel was looking for a revelation of God in power, a time when he would overthrow her enemies and give her everything she wished. It was a misconception which Amos tried to correct.

The Day of Yahweh has to do with nations and not with individuals.²⁸ It is as nations that men will be gathered for judgment. Such a corporate emphasis precedes an individualism that is first discernible, perhaps in Jeremiah. It is a day of stern judgment that concerns Israel as well as other nations. It is a day of darkness, and not of light.

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord!
 Why would you have the day of the Lord?
 It is darkness, and not light;
 as if a man fled from a lion
 and a bear met him;

²⁸ Much of the following material is based on H. Wheeler Robinson, Inspiration and Revelation in the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), pp. 135-147.

or went into the house and leaned
 with his hand against the wall,
 and a serpent bit him.
 Is not the day of the Lord darkness,
 and not light,
 and gloom with no brightness in it? (Amos 5:18-20)

The Day of Yahweh is clearly suggestive of a superhuman intervention. It is not to be a gradual evolution, but a cataclysmic invasion of history by the divine. Like other theophanies, there is the possibility of abnormal phenomena in nature. Ordinarily, the work of judgment is done by the agencies of nature. But the Day of Yahweh depends, ultimately, on Yahweh alone.

There is a two sided implication to that day (one sided for Amos). It brings retribution for the wrong and deliverance of the right. It is the day of his vengeance and of his favor. It is the day of Yahweh's activity in whatever form is necessary. It is a day that is near. Suddenly and soon, Yahweh will act. The day is set in the heart of God. The thought always pushes forth into action, even for Yahweh. Contemplation of the act, in this sense, performs it. It is unavoidable.²⁹

Amos led the way in the reversal of the meaning of the Day of Yahweh. Prior to him, it suggested an extraordinary manifestation of Yahweh's activity on Israel's behalf. This is especially true in relation to victories of Israel in battle. Now, however, it meant a day of Yahweh's judgment on Israel and on the world. It meant even

²⁹That the Day of Yahweh will fall specifically at the New Year's Festival see Lindblom, op. cit., p. 318. (Morgenstern combines the prophecy and the day. Amos proclaims judgment during the New Year's ceremony. See Morgenstern, op. cit., p. 174ff.)

more than this. It meant a final judgment (this would be modified by Hosea).

What gave rise to this form of prophecy? It was horror at the apostasy of the people of Israel. They had left Yahweh and gone their own way. They were following their own pleasures and had forsaken the will of God. Theologically, for Amos, the age of the covenant in history had come to an end. God had instigated the covenant of the amphictyony. Now he would dissolve it. He would send a famine on the land, a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. In their desolation and in their exile, in their despair and in their sorrow, they would seek the word of God but would not find it (Amos 8:11,12). God would no longer communicate with his people. The death proclaimed is a spiritual death. Man does not live by bread alone.

According to H. Wheeler Robinson, there is a direct connection between the conception of a Day of Yahweh and revelation.³⁰ They touch at four main points. Primarily, the Day of Yahweh brings into focus the manifestation of God's purpose in history. The Day of Yahweh is the epitome of history. In it the whole past and future run together into a significant unity. The moral character of Yahweh's government is revealed in this, as is the fact that the essence of that government is Yahweh's purpose. In it, Yahweh reveals himself in his power. The ever-recurring problem of his apparent slowness to act is removed, once and for all. At this point a new

³⁰H. W. Robinson, op. cit., p. 143ff.

history begins. It is the sure clue to the meaning and unity of history under God's control.

Secondly, the character of the day reveals the nature of revelation. It is a day in which God's acts are his speech. The characteristic feature is that God acts, regardless of whether the means be human, natural, or mysterious. The living God is the God of action. He is in deed what he is in word. They are the same. And the action is transcendent; it is from beyond man and nature, even though man and nature may be the means by which God achieves his purpose.

Thirdly, Yahweh is victorious within the present world-order and on the stage of history. The heavens are drawn into man's affairs. Myth is subordinated to history. The final vindication of Yahweh comes within time and space. God's wrath shall not return to God ("be revoked" in Amos) until God has established the purposes of his will.

Finally, the Day of Yahweh ushers in the new revelation, the new age of justice, peace and prosperity on earth. But it will not take place until he has judged all nations, including Israel. The relationship of God to man is above time and space, but is not able to articulate itself in the Old Testament without their aid. The Day of Yahweh signifies, ultimately, the kingly rule of God over man and history.

VII. Election And Rejection

The idea of rejection presupposes that Israel belonged to Yahweh. They were his Chosen People. The other nations could be said to be doomed, but they were not rejected. The message of the prophets was based on the idea of election. This idea was picked up from the Mosaic tradition. It was a constant, unquestioned article of faith. Yahweh's choice of Israel was a free choice. This was an act of love for his people. But love could turn to wrath at the apostasy of Israel.

The concept of a chosen people implies certain responsibilities. Yahweh had made certain claims upon Israel. First, they were to remain faithful to him. Second, they were to obey his moral commands expressed in law and tradition. The holy God demanded a holy people fulfilling his holy will in justice and righteousness. But they had deserted God, forgotten his commandments, and followed their own ways. They had rejected him. Now, he was rejecting them. This is the situation that Amos, and other prophets, faced. If the rejection was final, what would become of Israel and of mankind?

Election is an action in history. It has its correlative in the covenant concept.³¹ Both are accepted in faith.

The Old Testament doctrine of election and covenant, is, then, an historical statement of act, even though it be a fact that must be accepted by faith, and is otherwise meaningless. It

³¹See Chapter II.

declares that to Israel there has come a real historical experience of divine deliverance, associated with a personal manifestation of God and a summons to obey him. This is a philosophy of history (or rather, a theology of history) which finds its constituent elements in the experiences of the Israelite clans at the time of the Exodus, as these experiences came to be interpreted by religious insight. It cannot be proved to have originated with Moses, for the Pentateuch does not provide us with primary historical documents. But there seems to be no other sufficient cause to explain it prior to the eighth century. And the writings of the prophets are evidence that they did not give the doctrine birth. They tell of a line of witnesses like themselves who had continued a tradition originating in the creative period of the Exodus, the Wanderings and the entrance to Yahweh's land.³²

Yahweh is the Maker and Savior of a nation. The unity of Israel is based on this concept. It is a nation with a distinctive character. The terms of the covenant specify the ethical norms of the community and the personal characteristics of Yahweh, the unique God of a chosen nation.

These concepts are the concepts embodied in the prophets. They denounce the syncretistic cult and the social conception of the community. The leaders of the nation flaunt their independence and self sufficiency. In this, they reject the obligation of the covenant and the covenant God. The prophets, however, hold to the covenant standards. Yahweh needed no formal and literal sacrifices in the wilderness. He needs none now. Instead, let there be righteousness and justice. Traditional and cultic links could no longer keep alive a relationship that had been neglected. The tie was broken. The question was whether or not it could be restored. Amos

³²Scott, op. cit., p. 120.

held out only a slim hope.

Seek good, and not evil,
that you may live;
And so the Lord, the God of hosts,
will be with you,
as you have said.
Hate evil, and love good,
and establish justice in the gate;
it may be that the Lord, the God
of hosts,
will be gracious to the remnant
of Joseph. (Amos 5:14,15)

Amos could not even promise the blessing of a remnant. Noah, Abraham, and even Moses suggest the remnant idea of the past. Now, however, there is no remnant promised; not even one man. Election is the prior and positive context of the idea of the remnant. It is a saved and a saving element in Judaism.³³ The prophets, normally, hold out hope, even if only in the form of a remnant. Since election is God's answer to human sin and human need, election throws into high-relief the elect and the non-elect, the remnant and the "many." Those who survive a great catastrophe are felt to have a righteous character. Through the remnant, the life of the people may go on. They are a depository of faith, a spark of life to be passed on to others. In this the grace of God is shown alongside his justice.

Israel's election was supposed to be vindicated by that which Israel's history produced. Amos was horrified by what he saw in Israel. The contrast between the people in their syncretistic and

³³Alan Richardson (ed.), Theological Wordbook of the Bible (New York: Macmillan, 1950), p. 189.

sacrificial religion and his concept of righteousness was overwhelming. The contrast between the great purpose of Yahweh and the failure of Israel to appreciate it, caused him to rail against Israel. There was little hope of reform. For this reason, the people would perish. There was no alternative conclusion. And the destruction would be complete. There was one chance for Israel. She must give the moral character of Yahweh a place in her social and religious life.³⁴ This she would not do. Amos saw no hope for Israel.

For Amos, Israel was rejected. The judgment had already begun. Like the other prophets, it was never his intention to give Israel a new religion, nor did he give the people a new conception of God. He related to the people the old, understood, convenantal conceptions of a chosen people. He compared those conceptions to the present situation. Even as Yahweh had been rejected so was Amos' message, but it was remembered later in Israel's crisis.

VIII. Universalism And Morality

"All intense religions have a tendency to extend the power of the divinities over their special regions to include heaven and earth."³⁵ For the pagan religions, this never breaks the bonds of polytheism. It is essentially a special tribute of the worshipper toward the gods. For the developing monotheistic Hebrews, it was

³⁴T. H. Robinson, op. cit., p. 71.

³⁵Lindblom, op. cit., p. 333.

thought of as a reality. Yahweh was increasingly perceived as free from local limitations. Amos, for example, knew that God was everywhere (Amos 9:2ff).

The land of Israel was thought of as Yahweh's land only in the sense that he chose it. Therefore, he was not bound to the people of Israel. If Israel were rejected, he could choose another nation. Since Israel had rejected Yahweh, it would be no different than with Ethiopia or the Philistines (Amos 9:7). In the movements of peoples in history there was no difference between them. Israel was distinct only in its chosenness. All nations would be judged under the common laws of humanity regardless of their religious system. The nations were made neighbors by history, but they refused to live like neighbors. Therefore, they are judged (Amos 1, 2).

The universalism of Yahweh manifests itself specifically in ethical demands which coincide with the religious and moral norms in Israel's tradition. The most essential laws are universally applicable. Certain qualities, as justice, honesty, humanity, charity, etc., could be demanded of any man, regardless of his national background. For this reason, Yahweh's ethical will is valid for all mankind. Therefore, he punishes other nations that know neither pity nor mercy.

. . . It was the prophetic religion that for the first time in history brought morality and religion together in a unique way, which distinguishes this religion from all others not dependent upon it. The uniqueness is not in the mere interfusion, for that has proceeded in some degree wherever religion had reached higher levels and passed beyond nature-worship. The uniqueness is in the integration of both into a new unity. . . .³⁶

³⁶H. W. Robinson, op. cit., p. 79.

The revelation of God in history will tend to bring morality and religion into their closest unity. The spiritual and moral principles in their highest form in the past need to be applied to the ever-changing situation of the present. Yahweh's world-judgment remains constantly applicable.

Yahweh's distance from and sovereignty over all nations and nature is expressed in relation to his holiness. In Amos 4:2 he swears by his holiness to bring justice and punishment. He swears by his divinity, that is, by himself. For the prophet such holiness implies a contrast with human sin and God's reaction against it. In view of the holiness of Yahweh, all are unclean and face judgment from the righteous God.

The love of Yahweh was recognized as a potent reality by Hosea, but to Amos was revealed only God's justice and judgment. The conflict of love and justice within Yahweh himself is the theme of the book of Hosea.³⁷ The love of Yahweh is exclusively love for Israel. Behind the election concept lies the concept of Yahweh's love. The future is also a creation of his love.

Yahweh's wrath is the antithesis of his love.³⁸ Calamities of history are thought of as educative acts of Yahweh for his people. When wrath triumphs over mercy and love, it is caused by the people. They bring God's wrath upon themselves by neglecting his will and going after their own desires. In the final judgment, as that to

³⁷See footnote 4, p. 56.

³⁸Lindblom, op. cit., p. 337.

which Amos referred, God's wrath will be predominant (i.e. Amos 8). While Yahweh's love belonged only to Israel, his wrath could rise against all nations because of their evil deeds.

Therefore, two parallel lines run through history for the prophets, one determined by Yahweh's love, another by his wrath.³⁹ These represent two different sides of Yahweh, both of which represent his divine character. Because they were never synthesized into one, there would always be hope for Israel. Perhaps, in the worst crisis, Yahweh would be gracious (Amos 5:15).

The social situation, in which fragmentation and immorality were prevalent, revealed the reason for God's anger. The solidarity of Israel had been broken. No longer was there justice (mishpat) and a loyal helpfulness (hesed). The unity necessary in nomadic time and essential now in Israel was gone. The strength of their religious consciousness went with it.⁴⁰ That which had created Israel had been forsaken. The new social forms, created by the village, the city and the state, no longer contained the earlier blood relationships, but only a communal sense. The monarchical system had eliminated the tribal culture. Individual interests prevailed. Class distinctions brought oppression and injustice.

In Amos' terms, justice had turned to wormwood. There was no justice in Israel. This is apostacy in the face of a righteous God

³⁹Ibid., p. 339.

⁴⁰See H. W. Robinson, op. cit., p. 83ff.

and an historical covenant. Moral deprivation was a result of religious apostacy. The two go together. If the people had remained true to the will of Yahweh, they could not help but be moral and just. Religion and ethics go together; the motive and the act.

IX. The Prophets And History

The God of the prophets is a God of history, revealing himself in events. He is transcendent and not immanent. Yahweh had chosen Israel as his own people; this was manifest in the deliverance from Egypt. Here Yahweh appears in an historical event. In this, Yahweh retained a personal quality, demanding faith, love, gratitude, and obedience. This was the basis of the teachings of the prophets. They denounced the people for having forgotten Yahweh, his true worship and his moral demands. Of course, this opposed the popular way of thinking.

This prophetic view of history has some parallels in the ancient world. What is distinctive is that "the prophets regarded the history of Israel as a coherent history directed by moral principles and in accordance with a fixed plan."⁴¹ The fact of election exposed in their deliverance from Egypt was followed by other historical actions which set God's seal on the fact of election. In the light of this election Israel discovered its own history and the history of other nations. Yahweh's love for and special care of

⁴¹Lindblom, op. cit., p. 325. .

Israel is central in prophetic thought. Their challenging the people to fulfill Israel's purpose for mankind signifies an historical view, a view with future.

The prophets were not the first to propose the concept of divine election and guidance for Israel. The ideas were already salient in the Pentateuchal books. It is to these ideas that the prophets point. They act as the "memory," in this sense, of Israel. It was one of their purposes to make the people aware of their past, not for the sake of knowledge, but for the sake of making them conscious of Yahweh and of their own destiny contained in it. They attempted to make such a consciousness personal, so that the people could say that this was their history, their destiny.

It is certainly that the prophets were not interested in all of the happenings of the past, but only in a few outstanding events, great moments in which Yahweh made himself manifest. The revelations of Yahweh appeared on the stage of history, and in those revelations Yahweh showed his control over all of history.

Thoughts of the past necessarily turn man's attention to the future. Salvation relates to the past, but it is manifest in the future. The present situation results from yesterday. It is changed tomorrow as men seek God.

The prophets could see that the destiny of the chosen people was not fulfilled in their own day, but they were confident that the same God who had been Master of the past was also working in their own time and would continue to control the future. One of their chief aims was to convince their hearers that God had not confined his efforts to great moments of the past but was still at work within the world. And they believed that the promises

made in the past could be fulfilled in the future only as men in their own day turned to God and sought to do his will.⁴²

The prophets were not, essentially, prognosticators. If this view is stressed as central it soon proves illusory. The apocalyptic portions of Scripture, for example, defy accurate interpretation. Yet, the prophets were concerned about the future. They were concerned about hope for Israel, hope based on the promises of the past. Even in the pronouncements of doom by Amos there were flickers of hope. Still, the prophets had to fight against false optimism. Peace and prosperity, for example, did not eliminate the moral demands of Yahweh. The urgency in the cry of the prophets is a reminder of the need for righteousness. The prophets were concerned with what must happen in the light of the purposes of God.

The deepest insights into the religious interpretation of history are found in the prophets.⁴³ The reality of God in temporal experience is stressed by them. The decisive consequences revealed in the past reveal also an independence from shrines and cult-forms. For this reason the religion of Israel did not perish with the destruction of its sanctuary. Where other nations tried to secure themselves by economic or military means, Israel's security depended on its relationship to its God.

History, then for the prophets, is an expression of Yahweh's free and purposive action. In history is to be found the truth about

⁴²Hyatt, op. cit., p. 90. ⁴³Scott, op. cit., p. 135.

God. Good and evil are not the result of chance, but are consequences of the actions of men and God. It will be that way until Yahweh's final consummation of history. God is the eternal reality that gives meaning to the concept of time.

We easily accept the relation of the prophets, as well as of the priests, to tradition. God speaks through them to remind the people of himself and of their commitment to him and to mankind. The cultic, ritualistic patterns (even ours) have difficulty in keeping pace with the changes in culture; that is, they become frozen in the past and lose meaning for today. What is lacking is a vibrant interpreter. The paradox of such a situation is that the very lack of an interpreter is a sign of apostasy.

The Old Testament prophet compared his present situation with his religious heritage. This was his touchstone for reform. Against this "opposition" Yahweh spoke his will through the prophet. The social situation of prophetic times was viewed in the light of the religious conceptions of early Israel. But not only this. It was pointed out that Israel prefered to reject its responsibilities to Yahweh. The transcendent God was forgotten. His love was rejected. The covenant was broken.

Israel's original "religious consciousness" disappeared along with Israel's unity. The seal of God's continued revelation was lost to Israel. The prophets attempted to restore the lost relationship to God by restoring Israel's relation to her past, by making history and destiny personal. Even the meaning of "the day of Yahweh" was

reversed. It was therefore a misconception to believe any longer in an invasion of divinity to save Israel from her enemies. In her religious and moral decay, Israel herself was summoned to judgment. The expected penalty was spiritual death, the end of revelation, the end of meaning in history.

Instead, as we know, God's love persevered. That divine invasion took another form. The transcendent God became immanent in order to save the world (John 3:17). The love behind the covenant found its unique expression in Jesus, the Christ. But was this the end of history? To this question we now turn in a brief, but critical, interlude.

CHAPTER IV

THE CLIMAX: CHRIST

(A CRITICAL INTERLUDE)

. . .The Messianic prophets' steadfast will to look history in the face and to accept it as a terrifying dialogue with Yahweh, their will to make military defeats bear moral and religious fruit and to tolerate them because they were regarded as necessary to Yahweh's reconciliation with the people of Israel and its final salvation -- their will, again, to regard any and every moment as a decisive moment and hence to give it worth religiously -- demanded too great a religious tension, and the majority of the Israelites refused to submit to it, just as the majority of Christians, and especially the popular elements, refuse to live the genuine life of Christianity.¹

What has been said thus far points easily to the endless number of places in history in which the conceptions of faith may be explored. In essence, we have touched on only two; the Exodus Event and the prophetic conceptions surrounding Amos. Beyond this chapter, we shall touch on two others in the lives and convictions of Saint Francis of Assisi and Kierkegaard.

There are many other places which could have been chosen. These are the places most easily described as "hinges of history," turning points at which time one age ends and a new age begins. For example, Exodus had marked the end of slavery and the fulfillment of promise. Amos marked the end of God's patience and the threat of his judgment for Israel. Just as easily the proclamation of Moses (Deuteronomy 33) marked the end of wanderings and the beginning of conquest

¹Mircea Eliade, Cosmos and History (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), p. 108.

and settlement; the cry of Samuel at Gilgal (I Samuel 12) marked the end of the period of the Judges and the beginning of Kingship in Israel; Jeremiah (Jeremiah 7) marked the end of Israel as a nation and the relative permanence of the exile (Jeremiah 29). Zechariah (Zechariah 1) marked the end of exile and the beginning of a restoration. In this same sense, Jesus marked the end of Messianic promise and the beginning of the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:16ff, I Corinthians 15:3ff). If it were not a new age, symbolized ultimately in Christ's resurrection, then the faith of Christians is as futile as Paul suggests.

But God's reign is hidden in the events surrounding man and in man himself. As it was for the Yahwist:

. . . For a time it may have seemed that Yahweh had withdrawn himself from history. But it was not so. His activity was only different from what had been experienced in the holy wars of former times; it was hidden and not in sacred manifestations, but almost concealed in the profane. This new experience is the background against which the Yahwist wrote his work; and in this work, which is one story of wonderful, hidden guidance and dispensation, can be detected the vigor of a discoverer's joy.²

So also was it for Jesus:

God's reign is hidden from us, and must be believed and understood in its hiddenness. Not in the way the apocalypticists thought, beyond the heavens, in the bosom of a mysterious future, but here, hidden in the everyday world of the present time, where no one is aware of what is already taking place. Of this Jesus speaks in his parables of the kingdom of God.³

²Gerhard von Rad, Genesis (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 29f.

³Gunther Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), p. 69.

History, therefore, is shown to be the subtle manifestation of God himself revealed to those who are able to see: that is, to the men of faith. History is not just the realm of human action or human thought; nor is it just the realm of human hope or human destiny. Past, present, and future are involved with the action of God himself. God is the motif' in the story of Moses. He is also the motif' in the story of Jesus. It is focused in God's action, in events motivated and instigated by God. It is noted prior to Jesus' birth to Joseph, "'and his name shall be called Emmanuel' (which means, God with us)" (Matthew 1:23b). Jesus makes the reality of God present for man. This is the mystery and marvel of his existence.

According to Günther Bornkamm, the Jews at the time of Jesus were living in the past and in the future, that is, in their heritage of promise and in their Messianic hope.⁴ For them, there was no present. Jesus, for the early church, was not primarily a figure of the past, an historical figure, but the Risen Lord who combined present and future. In him the Kingdom that was coming was already here.

That is already apparent in the oldest brief sermonic and confessional formulae, in which we have before us the original form of the Gospel long before there were Gospels committed to writing. (Acts iii, 13ff.; iv. 10ff.; v. 30ff.; compare especially I Cor. xv. 3ff., etc.) They all speak with extreme concentration simply of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and proclaim thereby

⁴Ibid., see Chapter I, "Faith and History in the Gospels."

the end of this old age and the breaking in of the new world of God in salvation and judgment.⁵

In this sense, the action of God is revealed in the actions of the present which involve the future, as much as in the actions of the past. For the Christian, however, there develops an additional problem. Is Christ the last and greatest manifestation of God? Or is he only the greatest manifestation and not the last? Or is he the only important manifestation, whether last or not? In other words, does history (qualitatively speaking: salvation history) end with Jesus, or not?

Various views may be, and are, held in regard to such questions. Prior to examining such concepts, primarily Christ as the Midpoint of history and Christ as the End of history, we shall explore the idea of history itself.

Faith and history are united concepts. The one is required to survive the terrors of the other.⁶ The significance of the Gospels relates to a conception of history as well as to man's faith. In Bornkamm's words:

The story told by the Gospels signifies the end of the world, although not, it is true, in the sense of an obvious drama and a visible catastrophe. On the contrary, it is not the world which ends here obviously and visibly; rather it is Jesus of Nazareth on the cross. And yet, in this story, the world reaches its end. The story breaks off, and the people who belong to it have to bear witness to what has happened, everyone in his own way. . . . In each case a world has come to its end, be it for salvation or judgment. Its past is called in question. Its future is no

⁵Ibid., p. 16.

⁶See Eliade, op. cit., p. 159ff.

longer secure -- that future towards which it has been moving, according to all those traditions and laws which had been valid until then. In this sense its "time" has ended. In the encounter with Jesus, time is left to no one: the past whence he comes is no longer confirmed, and the future he dreams of no longer assured. But this is precisely why every individual is granted his own new present. For life, world and the existence of every individual, now stand in the sudden flash of light of the coming God, in the light of his reality and presence. This is the theme which Jesus proclaims.⁷

Jesus, the Christ, remains the unique problem in history and the stumbling-block to faith. The "line" of history reaches from Exodus to today. In that history, what is the true significance of the historical Jesus and the risen Christ?

I. The Idea Of History

In essence, history is a conception, a way of understanding events in relationship to other events, as well as understanding the events themselves. The idea of history can most easily be examined by exploring a particular view of history, in this case that of R. G. Collingwood in a book of that title; The Idea of History.⁸ This is probably the most fertile book on the subject available.

It is essential to remember that R. G. Collingwood comes at the question of history from the perspective of philosophy. In a sense, then, it is really not history that he is after, that is, the conglomeration of materials that may be called the "facts" of history, but the idea or the concept of history, itself. This is the

⁷Bornkamm, op. cit., p. 62.

⁸R. G. Collingwood, The Idea of History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

abstraction, intuited in, or inferred from the primary abstractions, the "facts" of history. It is, therefore, the widening of a perspective, the perennial procedure of philosophy.

Yet, this too is limited. It is, as Collingwood points out one area only of philosophy, even though a relatively new one, the philosophy of history. It has validity even as the philosophy of science or even the philosophy of philosophy has validity. It is an attempt to group a larger whole.

Even this foregoing description is not entirely accurate for, as Collingwood states, "Philosophy cannot separate the study of knowing from the study of what is known."⁹ In asking the question: how historians know, one cannot avoid the question of what historians know. Thus epistemology and metaphysics are united. But how are they related to history itself? This is the question to be considered. The topic of historical consciousness itself may be a relatively new one, but the topic of the study of historical consciousness is newer still.

Definitively, Collingwood suggests that history is a scientific inquiry into the actions of human beings. It is the interpretation of evidence about past events for the purpose of "human self-knowledge." To put it this way is to simplify Collingwood's provisional answers to his own questions. Each of them raises questions which must remain tentatively unanswered. For example, in what way is it scientific?

⁹Ibid., p. 3.

It certainly cannot be like a laboratory experiment. A document refuses to "act." Also, in what way do documents "contain" human action? Or, what is the criterion or criteria for interpretation? Or, what is the relation of what man has done to what man is?

To raise such questions now is to cloud the issue, however. It is more important to retain only the question, what does the word history signify?

History is normally called the history of human affairs. This is because of the dependence of the historian upon documents that are reflections of human thought. The historian is, therefore, concerned with what Collingwood calls the "inside" and the "outside" of an event. Both are essential to the true understanding of an event. The first relates to the motive or thought of which the latter is the act of action. The historian usually begins with the action but he never ends there. The thought of the agent needs to be considered.

The method, then, is necessarily peculiar to the historian. A scientist studying nature has no internal area to deal with, so that this is not a problem. The question for the historian becomes how can one move "inside" an event. He asserts that one must already have some understanding for this move to be possible. It becomes then much like praying for a change of attitude. You must already, in a sense, have something of that attitude, at least enough to consider it of value, before you ask for it. Otherwise you would not ask for it. In the case of the "inside" of an event, you must be already "inside," in part.

There is, then, a reflexive of cooperative action between understanding and an event. The event to be understood demands some prior understanding. The understanding relies on what may be called the "intention" of the event. (Here we are moving into the narrower view of phenomenology as it relates subject and object.) The "intention" inspires the interest of the understanding.

In spite of this cooperative effort Collingwood still stresses the supreme importance of thought. In fact, "All history is the history of thought."¹⁰ The thought about history becomes the reenactment of past events in the historians own mind. This demands an affinity of subject and subject. History becomes subjective, then. But it is not just affinity. There is a critical aspect to historical thought. The historian is, then, somehow within the event, in its "inside" and "outside," and yet outside of the event, at least far enough to criticize it. This is an unusual and a difficult idea -- yet, we do do this. The question is, however, is this a concurrent action? Collingwood implies that it is.

The power to move "inside" an event is a power of the imagination. This word is not used in any loose way. The imagination is a crucial, powerful, and, if deliberately applied, revealing aspect of the mind. It is crucial especially to the constructional aspect of history. It is the imagination that "fills in the gaps" in a narrative about history. It works on that which is implied in events. It

¹⁰Ibid., p. 215.

is the imagination that is the binding force between two occasions known in time. It is time in its dynamic aspect. It relates events in time. This is not imagining. Imagining goes beyond the actual implications of events. It is the tool of the novelist. I can infer, for example, that a man crossed a river, if I have seen him on both sides. I cannot infer how he got there, though I can limit the possibilities. To determine the mode of travel I need further information. In carrying out only legitimate inference I am using my imagination.

Surprisingly, at this point Collingwood destroys the concreteness of the events, as well. He claims that even these are given to historical thought by historical thought. It is difficult to argue into this closed system. The documents are historical thought about human action, as well as being the basis for historical thought about human action.

Collingwood adds three rules of method for the historian. His view must be localized in space and time. It must be consistent. And it must stand in a peculiar relation to the evidence, which is evidence only when it is contemplated historically. In this way true history is pinpointed.

Yet, what is it? It is a particular kind of knowledge of what mind has done and is doing. It is an activity of the mind and, therefore, limited by the powers of that mind. It relates to both subject and object as subject. For Collingwood the subjective criterion is peculiarly stressed and authorized to be the final judge of the

validity of the events discovered by the mind in relation to the event itself, or, "it is the life of the mind itself."¹¹

The term "self-knowledge" as used by Collingwood, which is the purpose of historical knowledge is, ". . . knowledge of his knowing faculties, his thought or understanding or reason."¹² It is not, then, knowledge of "self" as an object, but a knowledge of a functioning process. It is the "rise of history" that allows this examination. Only by investigating the mind by the methods of history can human nature be revealed. We have then come full-circle. History is thought and it also reveals the process of thought.

A number of items must be at least touched on before we move on in our study. One of the most important of these is Collingwood's criterion for historical study. Primarily, this is, ". . . our experience of the world teaches us that some kinds of things happen and others do not."¹³ This is stated in relation to the questioning of our authorities. The three aspects listed for historical study are the events, the authorities, and our own understanding. This last stated aspect is the paramount aspect. This "experience of the world" leads, of course, to the idea of history itself as the ultimate criterion.

This leads very nicely to the question the historian asks and its relation to historical knowledge. This question expresses the

¹¹Ibid., p. 227. ¹²Ibid., p. 205.

¹³Ibid., p. 239.

initiative of the scientist and limits the knowledge he will discover. What can be known then is limited by the formulated question.

Whether, the question can be answered depends on the relevance of the question (and thus on "a prior" knowledge) and on the force of the mind that compels the events and/ or the authorities to answer the question. Conclusions can be reached, however, even when statements are not made but can be inferred.

In summary, for Collingwood, history is a reenactment of the past in the present, made possible because of the power of the mind to "bridge the gap" to the past and an affinity of minds revealing intentions, for the benefit of "self-knowledge."

II. The Midpoint Of History

R. G. Collingwood is anthropologically oriented. History is revealed by the power of the mind to acquire self-knowledge. Theologically, history (qualitatively speaking: salvation-history) reveals to faith the action of God. Therefore, there is always the particular stress on certain historical moments. It should be noted here that the stress varies from time to time. Different aspects in history are emphasized to meet different needs.

The setting of a qualitative difference in history is only to stress two ways of looking at the same event. "Secular" history, for example, looks at the crucifixion of Jesus and sees an ugly incident out of which some values may be gained. "Salvation" history reveals to the Christian man of faith an event of supreme importance,

an act of God; and combined with the resurrection of Christ, the supreme act of God.¹⁴

The concept of Christ as the Midpoint of history is set forth primarily by Oscar Cullmann in his book Christ and Time.¹⁵

Oscar Cullmann is a descriptive Biblical theologian. In a sense, he attempts to place himself in the position of a person living within New Testament times, yet retain the critical apparatus and descriptive qualities of a contemporary scholar. In this sense, he is "doing" Collingwood's methodology. Not quite, however, for Collingwood suggests events in direct relations to historic personalities. Cullmann's suggestions appear to be in event or events in direct relation to "time." This is only to state that Collingwood attempts to be concrete, even if it is in relation to an idea. Cullmann is more concerned with an abstraction, or implication from an idea. In other words, he inserts the concept of contemporary Christian chronological time into the suggestions of New Testament thought to see if it fits. He thinks that it does.

It must be remembered that time is always contemporary Christian chronological time. The inferences from that time pattern, that is, the theological inference are not to be avoided or forgotten, but

¹⁴Reinhold Niebuhr's book Faith and History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949) deals in part with these two conceptions of history.

¹⁵Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950).

included in this concept of time. The conception is a linear one, with Christ's life, death, and resurrection as the midpoint of the entire historical process. It is not, then, that Christ is the midpoint only of the "Christ-line" of history, "salvation" history, but "secular" history, as well. There is no real separation. All that happens is judged on the basis of the work of Jesus Christ. Yet, there is a stress upon events of a particular sort, some happening before, some after, Christ.

One of the problems involved in such an interpretation is the fact that the norm of history is itself also history. This, of course, is not in Collingwood's sense an "idea of history," but an "event in history." It cannot, then, transcend history but is included in it. And it is an absolute criterion.

The problem is a theological one because it relates specifically to Biblical history. Christian revelation is bound closely to history. Cullmann calls this the "offense" of Primitive Christianity: "the offense is that God reveals himself in a special way and effects 'salvation' in a final way within a narrowly limited but continuing process."¹⁶ It is also to be noted that all theology is Biblical history. To know God, one must consider time and history.

The beginnings and ends of history cannot be detached from history in its redemptive form. Creation and the eschatological event belong to the realm of such history. Cullmann could not

¹⁶Ibid., p. 23.

separate the "essence" of Christianity from its historical setting. Salvation is, therefore, bound to the static (the Christ event) and dynamic (the time process) elements of history.

The major problem in this situation lies in the difficulty of seeing things "from the middle." We are in the area between the Midpoint and the Parousia (an impossible situation according to Judaism). In essence, the eschatological event has happened, yet it is not completed. It is a new division in the time-line. This is a baffling possibility. The questions it raises are many. The why of it is not explained. It seems as if God changed his mind, but not quite.

Yet Cullmann has not contradicted his procedure. He is attempting to be descriptive, not explanatory. He, therefore, also avoids attempting to explain the relation of "salvation" history to "secular" or general history. It is not parallel, really, nor is it identical. It is not a selection of special events either, else it would become an individual matter, and more subjective. It is an affirmation, primarily, of the Midpoint and its revelation of other "elected" moments. Thus, inspiration is needed to clarify the events, and a structure (the church?) is needed to hold on to the tradition. The Old Testament leads to Christ, and the New Testament leads away from him. The "new-age" has broken in, yet the "old-age" has not been totally displaced. We live in this "overlap." Yet, we are not to be concerned, for Christ is Lord of time as well as the church.

III. The End Of History

In order to appreciate the seeming absurdity and the ultimate wisdom of faith in Christ as the end of history and the fulfillment of life's meaning, it will be helpful to distinguish between the form and the content of the drama, recorded in the New Testament, as the focal point of this revelation. The form is that of a story, an event in history which becomes, by the apprehension of faith, something more than a mere event. It is an event through which the meaning of the whole of history is apprehended and the specific nature of the divine sovereignty of history is revealed. It is presented as the last in a series of God's "mighty acts," and one which has a particularly definitive character. Whatever may happen in subsequent ages, nothing can occur which will shake the faith of a true believer in God's sovereignty over all history.¹⁷

Reinhold Niebuhr is concerned here primarily with the "meaning" of particular historical events, especially the Christ-event. History as ended in Christ is really "the point in history where the meaning of history is completed."¹⁸ The Gospel story is therefore written out of its special significance for the man of faith and through the insight of the man of faith. It contains, in this sense, the claim that history is fulfilled in Christ.

The absurdity of such a claim is recognized early by the church, especially in the light of the delay of the coming, expected eschatological event. History in its ordinary sense continues, but significantly, in some way eternity is now present in history. This is the witness of the church. According to Rudolf Bultmann, for example, a man who has made a decision for Christ no longer lives in history but lives eschatologically.

¹⁷Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 145.

. . .to the Christians the advent of Christ was not an event in that temporal process which we mean by history today. It was an event in the history of salvation, in the realm of eternity, an eschatological moment in which rather this profane history of the world came to its end. And in an analogous way, history comes to its end in the religious experience of any Christian "who is in Christ". In his faith he is already above time and history.¹⁹

There is a relation between Bultmann and Collingwood, and Bultmann and Cullmann.²⁰ For this reason, we must explore briefly Bultmann's view of history and historical approach in relation to the other two men. For example, if Cullmann was "doing" what Collingwood suggested as far as methodology goes, then Bultmann was "doing" and interpreting what he was "doing." In a sense, Bultmann takes Cullmann's work as a document and Cullmann as an authority. He brings to both the critical apparatus of contemporary scholarship and the authority of his own autonomy, as an historian would. This is exactly as Collingwood suggests. Bultmann is, thereby, more completely like Collingwood. The interpretation is necessary, though complex and difficult. This is not to deny the potency of Cullmann, but only to point to the limited range of Christ and Time.

Bultmann agrees with Collingwood in the fact that the question the inquirer forms is important. There is need of prior understanding,

¹⁹Rudolf Bultmann, History and Eschatology (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 153. Here Bultmann is quoting Erich Frank but it is his own idea as well.

²⁰Bultmann relates to Collingwood in History and Eschatology, pp. 130-137, and to Cullmann in Existence and Faith (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 226-240.

". . .every interpretation incorporates a particular prior understanding."²¹ Also, "interest in the subject motivates the interpretation and gives it its way of formulating the question -- its line of enquiry."²² The reciprocal action noted in Collingwood is to be noted here. For Cullmann, this question is not raised in this way. It can only be raised if "self-knowledge" or "self-understanding" is sparked from history. Indirectly, this may be implied as a result of the study of history, but it is only a secondary action, a consideration Cullmann avoids.

For Bultmann, as for Collingwood, an affinity is needed with the author, and history becomes an intuitive art as well as a disciplined science. Human actions are considered, and their actions are related dynamically in history. The "internal" is related to the "external." "Real understanding would, therefore, be paying heed to the question posed in the work which is to be interpreted, to the claim which confronts one in the work. . . ."²³

Even though the Bible is to be treated as any other work of literature, Bultmann adds an existential dimension not considered by Collingwood (naturally!). This is the "action of God" which does not reveal itself to scientific procedures. Meaning must be given even to

²¹Rudolf Bultmann, Essays Philosophical and Theological (London: S.C.M. Press, 1955), p. 241.

²²Ibid., p. 243.

²³Ibid., p. 251.

the non-historical elements in the writings. True understanding requires this existential element. The phenomenon must reveal meaning even if it cannot reveal its essence.

Bultmann considers the Christ-event in a different way from Cullmann. In a sense, he lifts it out of time. It is a covenant with eschatology; whereas other covenants had been covenants with the people.²⁴ The Christ-event can therefore be stressed outside of the historical event. Cullmann, of course, would never allow this to happen. For him, the event is always confined to the historical event. The problem again is emphasized by the historical figure (almost lost in Bultmann). This formulates the paradoxical situation, the eschatological occurrence and the historical occurrence are both in Jesus. The Gospel of John most clearly retains this paradox. So Bultmann stresses "faith" and not history. This is, perhaps, his most difficult and confusing concept.

Bultmann is really concerned with the decision-making element revealed in history. The Christ-event lifted from time becomes the kerygma, the Christian proclamation. It is in response to this kerygma that salvation occurs. History is ended. Therefore, the Christ-event never becomes past. It is always a present reality. For Cullmann, history is retained. Here is a basic difference. Collingwood also, of course, could never agree with Bultmann at this point. History continues and is essential for "self-understanding."

²⁴Bultmann, History and Eschatology, p. 36f.

Bultmann, because of his stress on decision has a greater individualistic concern. Collingwood's is more communal and abstract. The stress for urgency, emphasized by Bultmann, is lost in Cullmann's historical view. Man stands "in the interim" for both Cullmann and Bultmann. The paradox is almost too much to face.

IV. Life In The Paradox

Günther Bornkamm had stated that the Jews in Jesus' day refused to live in the present. They lived rather in the past and in the future, in the Messianic promise and hope. For Bornkamm, Jesus brought future and present together not in hope, but in himself. Therefore, in him the new age broke in. Rudolf Bultmann says much the same thing in a different way:

. . . Sin is the striving to stand before God in one's own strength, to secure one's life instead of to receive it -- and therewith oneself -- purely as a gift from God. Behind this striving lies man's fear of giving himself up, the desire to secure himself and therefore the clinging to that which is at his disposal, be it earthly goods or be it works performed according to the commandments of the law. Lastly it is fear in face of the future, fear in the face of God himself, for God is the ever-coming God. Already in the Old Testament this is the real sin: not to trust in what God has done in the past of his people and not to be open for what he will do in the future, not to expose oneself to the future but to endeavor to have disposal over it.²⁵

The existential situation cannot be avoided. Faith is faith in the future which God continues to bestow on man, but it is a future which is present. The openness must be now or there is no openness to the future, that is, to God who provides the future.

²⁵Ibid., p. 99.

But what is the future? Is the new age historical or eschatological? Apparently, temporally, it is both. Life, then, remains in the paradox. The Christian is "of this world" and "not of this world." Is the Christ-event, then, past or present? Apparently, again, it is both. It is past in history. It is present at a moment of decision.²⁶ Is history ended? Apparently, again, the answer is both yes and no. It is ended as crucially important for man. It is not ended in that events continue. It may also be said to be now a "record" of decisions that relate to a past-event, the Christ-event as present against the backdrop of general or "secular" history. Therefore, even "salvation" history has not ended.

Regardless of what viewpoint is held toward such a problem as has here been considered, a man faces each moment caught in the web of the past, ignorant of the "turnings" of the future, and forced in the present moment to make decisions in spite of his limitations and his ignorance. In this he cannot long remain ignorant of his limitations. Yet he does. The story of history reveals the continual resurgence of man's ignorance. It reveals also the reminders to man of his limitations.

Obviously, this study could end at this point and still remain an inclusive whole. The two places in history which are yet to be explored relate to the Christ-event. If it is accepted that Christ is the end of history, the present event for both Saint Francis and

²⁶In this sense, it may be thought of as future. But future and present are related to faith.

Kierkegaard includes the Christ-event as a present (and therefore timeless) element against which decisions are continually made. There is a covenant, then, with eschatology. If, on the other hand, it is accepted that Christ is the midpoint of history, both Saint Francis and Kierkegaard are continuations of Biblical theology; that is, they are added revelations of divinity in history for the man of faith.

We can accept Collingwood's knowledge of history for self-knowledge if that knowledge includes knowledge of God (which this author thinks it does). We also accept Cullmann's injunction that to know God one must consider time and history. Christ may be the ultimate meaning of history, and therefore its midpoint or end, but history is too important an element in relation to knowledge of God to be discarded. The elements of salvation remain in history.

The personalities of Saint Francis and Kierkegaard provide us with opposite (and therefore dialectical?) poles in relation to the communication of the Christian faith in history. An understanding of their impact on man in relation to Christ is worth the effort involved.

CHAPTER V
AN INTIMATE DEVOTION
SAINT FRANCIS

Hail, Queen Wisdom
The Lord keep thee and thy holy sister, pure Simplicity.
Hail, Lady holy Poverty,
The Lord keep thee and thy holy sister Humility.
Hail, Lady holy Charity,
The Lord keep thee and thy holy sister Obedience.
Hail, all ye most holy Virtues,
May the Lord keep you,
For it is from Him alone that you derive.

No one in all the world may possess a single one of you unless he first dies to self. He who possesses one and does not offend against the others possesses all. But he who offends against one possesses none and offends against all.¹

The Third Crusade (1198-1192) shattered against the forces of Saladin. In 1187, Jerusalem and most of the Holy Land had fallen again into the hands of the Mohammedans. Europe, roused by the loss, sent its most elaborately equipped Crusade eastward. Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, King Philip Augustus of France, and King Richard "Coeur de Lion" of England led three great armies to battle with Saladin. But Frederick drowned accidentally in Cilicia. Philip returned home to push his own political schemes. Only Richard remained. That impetuous galant could only retake Acre. Jerusalem remained a Moslem possession.

Ten years later, another smaller Crusade moved eastward,

¹Francis of Assisi, Saint Francis of Assisi (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p. 165.

bargained with the Venetians for transportation, wrecked havoc on Constantinople and with it Eastern Christianity, and dissipated its potential of power in rape and plunder. In 1212, the so-called "Children's Crusade" struggled out of Germany, crossed Italy, and wandered into slavery in Egypt. The Fifth Crusade (1218-1221) spent its strength crossing Egypt. Other Crusades -- none successful -- would follow, but these span the life of a single man whose influence is greater, and whose quiet life has reached farther, than the mass of lives spent attempting to punish the Mohammedan armies for "perverting" Christianity.

Politically, geographically, economically the Crusades changed the face of the west and of the near East. Religiously, the unassuming Saint of Assisi, Francis Bernardone, in imitating Christ, instilled a new spirit behind the face.

It was not entirely new. Restless forces were at work already in this age of faith. The Cistercians attempted to reform monasticism from within. The Cathari (Albigenses), a sort of new Manichaeism, attacked the institutional church from within and without. The Waldenses, who unlike the Cathari originated in no conscious hostility toward the church, stood obstinately for "apostolic poverty." They were considered ignorant only, and ignored at first. They were soon too large a group to ignore.

Missionary efforts to convert the Cathari and Waldenses failed. A crusade against them led to twenty-years of war in Southern France. The Synod of Toulouse (1220) forbade the use of the Scriptures for

the laity and originated the inquisition. The Cathari and Waldenses were destroyed or so repressed as to remain ineffectual. But their existence probably cleared the way for the Dominicans, and for that more popular order, the Franciscans.²

I. His Life

Giovanni Bernardone was born in the year 1182 in the town of Assisi, situated on the road from Perugia to Spoleto, on a slope of the mountains of Umbria. His father, Pietro Bernardone, was a well-to-do cloth merchant of Assisi, one of a growing number of a social class growing in importance at the expense of the feudal aristocracy in the self-governing towns in Italy. It was a time of change and a time of petty warfare.

Francis, the boy's nickname, given to him perhaps because his father had been absent in France during his birth, was a child born to be different. He would become the only Saint canonized with a nickname; Francesca, the "Frechman."

The father wanted no scholar son but a practical one, a merchant apprenticed to the business of money-making. He soon discovered that he had a playboy, who had no use for money -- except to spend it, or give it away. Dressed in the best of clothes, tailored and dyed, he squandered life as the natural leader of a group of fancy -- and not so fancy -- young men.

²For a brief examination of all this material see Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 219-238.

The morals of Assisi were notorious even in the tough Italy of those days. The town was early chronicled as a "New Babylon."³ There are detailed accounts of the debauchery that was even connected with the feast days. Such temporary compensation for the harsh life was set on a background of murder, robbery, and oppression. Francis, no doubt, reveled in it all, though a sensitive streak occasionally burst through the facade. For example, the incident with the leper.

"Click, click, click." The sore-covered deformity of what had once been a young man like Francis met Francis's terrified eyes. The moment had come. It was now or never.

Jumping off his horse, Francis ran forward to meet Lazarus.

Did his failing flesh and blood once again hesitate and shrink back as plunging his hands into his purse, Francis pulled out a handful of gold to pour on to the poor wretch? Too often he had paid himself off by paying to others. No, not this time. With the gold he gave himself, closing his eyes maybe -- and who would not? -- he held out his long thin arms and grasped the leper's hand, cold, emaciated, ulcerated, raised it up to his lips and kissed it with a recklessness and native courtesy which were ever to be characteristic of his dedicated life.⁴

The dedication would come later. This incident climaxed a long and painful period of self-conquest. Even then Francis remained a proud dreamer of ephemeral dreams. He dreamed ideally of that which was reality, without its harsh side. He loved the troubadours with their gay songs and rakish garments. He loved the knights they sang about. He dreamed of battle and conquest, of praise and glory. The handsome, young man of Assisi was not so unlike so many others, and as impetuous.

³Michael de la Bedoyere, Francis, A Biography of the Saint of Assisi (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 28.

⁴Ibid., p. 22.

In November 1202, when Francis was twenty, Assisi decided to challenge the larger Papal city of Perugia. It was a matter of honor, because of a prior loss of face. Perugia had been granted an overlordship of Assisi lands for assisting some feudal lords in a ruse. This neighborly rivalry was of long standing. Almost any reason was enough for a battle.

In medieval fashion, with bells ringing and trumpets blowing, the "army" set out. As Francis could afford horse and equipment, he rode with the cavalry, resplendent, but rather small in his armor, cone-shaped helmet, and heavy lance. They rode to battle, to defeat and humiliation. The Perugians rushed out, infuriated by such audacity, and cut the army to pieces at the bend in the river, where the bridge crosses the Tiber.

Francis was stunned by the slaughter and the waste of lives. In the year in prison his mood went from its natural gayness to somberness. Physically, he became very ill (tuberculosis?) which may have been the cause of his release. On returning to the natural world from his dark cell he is said to have noted that nature is unusually fair to see. The natural world invigorated him. Extroverted in behavior, he was inwardly a dreamer, an imaginative lover who could not do without the beauties of God's creation.

The old sensual magic was gone. He was still depressed. He wandered about that which he had previously enjoyed. The stimulation of such action was gone. Even as he resumed his old way of living, the spirit was not the same. Divine love was calling deep within him.

In spite of this, his vision of knighthood was undiminished. By human standards he had done very well. He was a hero in Assisi, in spite of being taken prisoner. In 1205, he had another chance at glory. He set out with a Count Gentile to defend the boy king of Sicily, later to be Emperor Frederick II, and his widowed mother. All Assisi cheered as they left. They were soon to wonder at his instant return.

It may be that at Spoleto, thirty miles away, he became ill. Or it may be that here he received the first of the visions that would change his whole life. In either case, he faced the charge of cowardice by returning. Whatever happened, in the morning when his companions awoke, he was gone -- back to Assisi.

In spite of this action, he remained as popular as ever with the youth of Assisi. The torment of his actions did not affect his relations with his friends. The gay life was resumed. But if the first vision had been the giving of a message to return to Assisi, the second would tell him what to do.

The second stroke occurred on one of these uproarious evenings when Francis had plunged into the gay life and had been popularly elected as "master of the revels". The young men of Assisi, having had their feast, were parading through the streets of the city with Francis bringing up the rear, carrying his wand of office. Suddenly, in the words of the chronicler, he was "visited of the Lord". On this occasion the divine visitation seems to have rendered him totally immobile for, describing the affair afterwards, he said that, "had he been pricked as with knives all over at once, he could not have moved from the spot". There he stood, dressed in his gayest clothes and bearing his wand of office, alone in the middle of the road while his companions, not knowing what had happened, went moisily onwards. Eventually they discovered that their "master of the revels" was missing and went back to look for him. They found him still in a trance-like state, and, assuming that such behaviour could proceed only from

one cause they asked him, "Are you in love, Francis?" "Yes," he replied, "I am in love with a bride nobler, richer and fairer than you have ever seen." Such a reply could only be received with laughter, and the incident was quickly forgotten. But not by Francis.⁵

This extraordinary evening in the year 1206, marked the real turning point in his life. The long process of his conversion rolled on. The gradual realization of the purpose of his life defied all that was conventional. It would take courage to begin his appointed task. That courage came slowly.

Francis, it appears, had always been sensitive to the plight of the poor. He was moved to tears by the sight of misery and he tried to remove it. Once, while laboring in his father's shop, he had repulsed a beggar who asked for alms for the love of God. Remorseful over his action, he ran after the beggar and put money in his hand vowing never to refuse another who asked of him in the name of God. A little later, on riding to join some knights on the way to a war he had given away his rich attire to a knight poorly clad. Such actions came on impulse. He disdained any calculated efforts.

The inner perception was growing. Now he was rarely seen by his friends. When not working for his father, he would ride out in the barren, rocky country to meditate and pray. No one knew of this. He found it hard to convey his feelings to others. Then he felt moved to make a pilgrimage to Rome, the heart of Christendom.

⁵John R. H. Moorman, Saint Francis of Assisi (London: S.C.M. Press, 1950), p. 13.

Poverty was as ugly in Rome as it was in Assisi. In a reckless act, Francis cast his entire purse away in the shrine of Saint Peter. Hungry, perhaps driven by an inner necessity, he borrowed a beggar's clothes and begged around the doors of the great church. Conquering his repulsion, he associated with the squalid dregs of society whom he had been taught to hate and despise. Never again did he flinch at ugliness or disease. The beggar and the leper now had a friend.

Just outside of Assisi was a small, ruined chapel that Francis often visited. It was here that his third "divine visitation" occurred. As he was praying for guidance it appeared that the figure of Christ, painted in Byzantine style on the crude altar-cross, spoke to him. "Francis, go and repair my church which, as you see, is fallen down."⁶ Overwhelmed by the experience, Francis bought oil for a lamp to be placed before the crucifix and vowed to keep it lit. Then he set to work on the church. His father rebelled and finally locked Francis in a storeroom of the house to make him stop this nonsense. Released by his mother, he fled to San Damian's. To raise money for the church he began begging in the street.

This was, of course, too much for his father who hauled him before the bishop of Assisi for judgment. On a cold morning he stood in the forecourt of the bishop's palace where he was told that he must give back everything he had taken from his father. In front of the crowd Francis stripped himself naked saying:

⁶Ibid., p. 19.

I will return unto my father even the clothes which I have received from him. Until now I have called Pietro Bernardone my father: from henceforth I will say in all truth: Our Father who are in heaven, you are my treasure and my hope.⁷

This dramatic action broke forever the old pattern of his life.

Francis left the city heading north through the valley of Tescio where he was beaten by robbers. Seeking refuge in a monastery he was forced out within two days. Francis rejoiced in such suffering. It was a suffering like his Lord's. But the command to repair the church had not been removed from him. The materials to do so were obtained now by begging. The people thought him mad. But St. Damian's was improved as was St. Peter's in the city, and the little chapel of St. Mary of the Angels down in the woods. So the work went on -- for the love of God.

On the morning of St. Matthias' day, February 24, 1209, Francis received the vision that ended his questionings about his lifework. The priest read Christ's commission to his disciples:

And preach as you go, saying, 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without pay, give without pay. Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff; for the laborer deserves his food. (Matthew 10:7-10 Revised Standard Version)

To Francis this was a personal message. After mass was over he cried, "This is what I have been wanting, this is what I have been seeking; this is what I long with all my heart to do."⁸ With that he kicked

⁷Quoted in Leo L. Dubois, Saint Francis of Assisi; Social Reformer (unpublished dissertation, Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., 1904), p. 38.

⁸Moorman, op. cit., p. 28.

off his sandals, cast his staff away and threw aside his leather belt. Girding himself with a piece of rope he set himself to his task.

Here was the first Franciscan. Untrained, unlettered, and with little knowledge of what a preacher normally should know, he depended on a natural genius and inner inspiration as his guide. An element of recklessness in his nature contributed to his success. But primarily it was the drive of Christ's messages taken personally that led him on his unique way. His life was to be entirely an imitation of his Christ. This was his burden, and his glory. The demands on him were those of his Lord.

For two or three years, Francis went his lonely way, working and preaching and begging. These years of loneliness must have been a great trial to such a social personality. Yet, it was the price he was prepared to pay in obedience to his Lord. Mocked and maltreated, cursed by his family, excepting his mother, befriended only by the lepers, he staggered on his lonely way -- until his first disciple joined him.

Bernard da Quintavalle, at first sight, would appear to be an unlikely first disciple for Francis. Wealthy and of noble blood, slow and patient in decisions, careful and calculating he was almost an opposite to Francis' impulsive personality. He was a man of considerable standing in the city. Yet, he was intrigued by Francis and so invited him into his home. It may have been that Bernard wished to examine this man toward whom he felt drawn. Therefore, he made a bed for Francis in his own room to explore Francis actions at night.

In consideration for the other, each man pretended to sleep. Thinking Bernard asleep, Francis arose and knelt in prayer the whole night, praying over and over "My God and my all," and weeping. This was enough for Bernard. In the morning, he proclaimed his desire to go with Francis. They were soon joined by a third, Peter Catanei, a lawyer, and a fourth, a mystical young man named Giles. Silvester, a disillusioned priest, made it five.

Haphazardly, a brotherhood had formed. By this time, Francis had decided to divide up his men into groups of two or three, and all would go to spread their gospel of poverty and love. On these missionary journeys they suffered much persecution. It is no wonder. Who could follow such a strict and such a suffering way. Even the Bishop of Assisi pleaded with Francis to lower the standard of absolute poverty. To this Francis replied, "My Lord, if we should have possessions we should need arms to protect ourselves. For thence arises disputes, and lawsuits, and for this cause the love of God and of our neighbor is wont oft-times to be hindered, wherefore we be minded to possess naught of this world's goods."⁹

Still, Francis had not bargained for such a development of his community as continual growth. The solitary restorer of churches shrank from the responsibilities it would bring. In visions while at prayer, he saw great numbers of men from all over Europe coming to join

⁹Ibid., p. 56.

his band. The visions restored his confidence. It was as if God had set his seal for Francis on what was happening. As no religious Order could possibly exist without some sort of Rule, he set himself to write one. It was a short and simple testament of his devotion.

With this document in his bosom, he set out for Rome and the Pope's blessing. It was not easily obtained. When he did finally attain an audience with Pope Innocent III, his Rule was rejected as too strict, and he was advised to join some other Order himself. However, when it was pointed out by Francis only supporter in the curia, the Cardinal of Saint Sabina, that they were rejecting, in essence, Christ's example of perfection, the Pope reconsidered. Francis left Rome the head of a religious Order.

Two years after the visit to Rome, a seventeen-year old girl called Clare, of a noble family of the Scifi, was greatly moved by his preaching. What could he do with her? On Palm Sunday, March 18, 1212, he cut her hair before the altar of the little chapel of the Angels and accepted her into the Order of the Lesser Brothers. She was lodged at a Benedictine nunnery until he could arrange for her to have one of her own. In one way it was a great tragedy. She spent forty years within monastic walls at Saint Damian's where the convent was built, in obedience to Francis' wishes. She was head of the first community of Poor Clares or Minoresses. The Franciscan ideal of being where the need is would later release these feminine Franciscans for service. But it could not happen in the thirteenth century.

The Order grew and spread. Across Europe, working among the

people, on the roads, in the cities, in the fields, the Franciscans labored. They were laborers rather than mendicants, though this is what they became later. They begged in order to work and to worship. Francis was always the example. Once he even set sail to convert the Moslems, but his ship was driven back. He did reach, finally, to Acre and Damietta in time to witness the loss of six-thousand men in the crusading army. It is also said that he strangely visited a Malek-el-Kamil, Sultan of Egypt and leader of the Saracen hosts.¹⁰

In 1220, a crisis in the Order caused him to rush back to Italy. In fact, the Order was being taken from him. A new and more adequate Rule was established. By then a house had been built for the friars, and a school started. Francis impassioned pleas got him nowhere. A papal bill of September 22 imposed a years novitiate on all would-be friars. The last six years of his life would be the saddest of his life. All that he had labored for was changed and organized. Only his example remained to inspire the exceptional disciple of the Order of Lesser Friars. Fortunately, some of that inspiration passed into the new Rule.

Three items remain to be mentioned. The first in this sad period is Francis establishment of a memorial to the child of Bethlehem; the Christmas Crib is still used and loved as a feature of his churches at Christmastime. The second is that out of this discomfort and pain came his greatest hymn; "Canticle of the Sun."¹¹ The last is

¹⁰Ibid., p. 99.

¹¹Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, p. 161.

the incident of the Stigmata. During the Lent of Saint Michael in September of 1224 on Mount La Verna, Francis retired to pray in private. His disciples waited anxiously during his vigil.

They had not very long to wait, for on Holy Cross Day, September 14th, the vigil reached its climax. Very early on that morning, when it was still dark, Francis had been praying under the stars. "O my Lord, Jesus Christ," he said, "two graces do I pray thee to grant unto me before I die: the first, that while I live I may feel in my body and in my soul, so far as is possible, that sorrow, sweet Lord, that thou didst suffer in the hour of thy most bitter passion; the second, that I may feel in my heart, so far as may be possible, that exceeding love wherewith, O Son of God, thou wast enkindled to endure willingly for us sinners agony so great." Then, when his prayer was ended, there appeared to him a vision of the Crucified in a light so brilliant and dazzling that people in the neighbouring villages thought that the sun had risen and started on their day's work. This glow lasted for over an hour while Francis remained in an ecstasy of joy and wonder. When at last the light waned and the vision faded, Francis discovered, in his hands and his feet and his side, wounds like those of the crucified Christ whom he loved so dearly and whose passion he had longed to share.¹²

Francis fell dangerously ill in the Spring of 1226. As he lay slowly dying he sang, to the horror of his devoted follower, Elias. On October third, listening to the Passion as written in the Gospel according to Saint John, he died. Two years later, he was canonized as a Saint.

II. The Legends

It is true that the issues are clouded in regard to the life of Saint Francis of Assisi. One can pick and choose among the "authorities" both in regard to the actual happenings in his life and to their

¹²Moorman, op. cit., p. 115.

chronology. The legends of Francis are legion. Yet, in spite of this disadvantage, it is important to have an accurate impression of his life in order to gain an adequate impression of the impact of that life on his disciples. His teachings follow from that initial impression, as well. It is his spirit that is captured in his teachings, and not his life-story. Yet, they are both the same. The life and the teachings are one.

Francis claimed no originality. He acted in obedience to teachings over a thousand years old. The primary difference, as stated earlier, is that he accepted these teachings as commands to him personally. His was an attempt to follow Christ actually, to live and to suffer as his Master had lived and suffered. Therefore, he considered it glorious to be scorned, admonished, and persecuted.

In the legends the difficulty becomes an obvious one:

His own disciples did not hesitate to try to shape the actual incidents of his life in such a way as to establish a conformity between that unassuming life and the life of Jesus Christ. This may seem to us to-day to be an act of daring, not far removed from blasphemy; yet it remains true that posterity has found in him an authority, a sureness, an attraction, a dedication, a simplicity, a rightness, a fearlessness, an inner joy, a love, a judgment, an understanding, a common sense, an insight into God's love and bounty, that we can only think of as a spiritual and psychological stamp, impressed by Christ, in a manner that parallels the bodily impression of the wounds of Christ in his flesh.¹³

In the rather fixed world of divine Revelation which was known to faith as certain, such an imposition of Scriptural materials on the life of Saint Francis would be accepted uncritically. For example,

¹³Bedoyere, op. cit., p. 10.

the two major and primary sources on his life, The Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi¹⁴ and The Mirror of Perfection,¹⁵ both by his early followers and probably the only contemporary accounts of his life, are rampant with such stories. In fact, it is only an extension of what Francis was attempting to do himself. The problem is that the extremes reached in the stories, especially in relation to the miraculous, make the expressions unbelievable. That they were unbelievable to the contemporary person must remain in the area of conjecture, however.

One story alone may serve as an example of these Scriptural impositions. We would have to go even beyond Christ to Moses (Exodus 17) for a comparison.

. . . And when that they were come about half way up the mountain, as the heat was very great and the ascent was weary, the peasant became very thirsty, in such sort that he began to cry aloud behind Saint Francis, saying: "Woe is me, for I die of thirst: if I find not something to drink, I shall choke outright." Wherefore Saint Francis got down off the ass and fell on his knees in prayer; and remained so long kneeling with his hands lifted up to heaven, until he knew by revelation that God had heard his prayer. Then said Saint Francis to the peasant: "Run quickly to that rock, and there shalt thou find the living water, which Hesu Christ in this hour, of His Mercy, hath made to come forth from out that rock." So he ran to the place that Saint Francis had shown him, and found a fair spring that had been brought out of the hard rock by virtue of the prayer of Saint Francis: and he drank his fill thereof and was comforted.¹⁶

¹⁴Francis of Assisi, The Little Flowers of Saint Francis of Assisi (London: Dent, 1898).

¹⁵Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, pp. 15-153.

¹⁶Francis, The Little Flowers, p. 172.

Both sources listed above are devotional, anecdotal accounts. The actual teachings of Saint Francis form a separate problem dealt with, for example, in The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi by Father Paschal Robinson of the Order of Friars Minor.¹⁷ He considers the writings critically and historically in relation to manuscript and tradition.

That the impact of Francis' own personal existence led to the legends of Saint Francis is an undeniable fact. His teachings accent that impact.

III. Imitatio Christi

All that there is to say about Saint Francis could be caught up in these words, *Imitatio Christi*, yet it is not an immediate total "following" that is implied, but a developing similarity in obedience to the revelations as they occur. The importance of the "visions" becomes obvious here. In this also the reactions of Saint Francis to the hearing of God's Word and to the admonitions and corrections of almost anyone becomes explainable. He was open to reproof and guidance regardless of its source.¹⁸

Still, there was a conscious imitation of Christ by Saint

¹⁷Francis of Assisi, The Writings of Saint Francis of Assisi (Philadelphia: Dolphin Press, 1906). For a newer translation see Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, pp. 157-234.

¹⁸For example, the admonishment of Francis by a peasant in Francis, The Little Flowers, p. 172. Francis kissed the peasant's feet and thanked him.

Francis. His thoughts centered on the life of Christ, especially on the Passion. He is said to vary in action in relation to his thought-pattern. At one moment, he would be joyful and singing praises to God because of the blessings of life in Christ. Then, his thoughts would shift to a consideration of the Christ's inner torment and the reactions of the people to Christ's message, and Francis would grow melancholy. Finally, his thoughts would center on the Passion and Francis would seep bitterly and writhe in agony and prayer. Such action could be analyzed psychologically, but this would not explain it. The impression of Christ's life taught, but seldom lived, by the Church was captured and held by the Poor Saint of Assisi. It permeates his life and teachings.

My brothers, let us think of the Good Shepherd, Who endured the Passion and Cross in order to save His sheep. Our Lord's sheep have followed Him in trouble, persecution and disgrace, in hunger and thirst, in temptation and other hardships, and by so doing have received from their Lord everlasting life. It therefore brings great disgrace on us servants of God that the Saints have done great things while we hope to win honour and fame merely by talking and preaching about them.¹⁹

Life is then, for Christians, not a teaching and a preaching about Christian living only, but a living of a particular type of life. Christ is the example, as are the Apostles of the early Church. It is a life in the image of the New Testament; having no possessions and willing to lose one's life. In essence, it is the life of servant to everyman. A disciple is no man's superior. Every man is to act as if

¹⁹Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, p. 172.

he had been ordered to wash the feet of his brothers. If this is disturbing it is to the peril of his own soul. Of all the creatures under heaven none was so acceptable as God's only Son. Yet, he was crucified. In what then can any other man glory? The only glory is in the cross.

Every disciple is admonished not to be seduced by a bad example. Nothing should be displeasing to him save sin. The servant of God is never troubled or angered except for love's sake, otherwise he stores up guilt. His patience and humility is tested and made known in time. The beatitudes are admonitions for perfection. These are extended and explained in intimate and loving words by Francis.²⁰

It is true that Francis uses Scriptures with a familiarity and freedom that is often remarkable. Often his concluding argument is a text of Scripture. In a sense, this is not unlike the rabbis of Israel or Paul himself. Accurate quotation is not his concern, or the concern of his time. The spirit of the Scripture, the mood -- if I may use that word -- of what it means to be religious or Christian, is his concern. In his day and in ours this might be considered the cause of unique authenticity; an authenticity that allows a man's originality and creativity to flow into society. In such considerations Francis might be thought of as novel, quaint, and personable if somewhat naive. His language is the language of the Bible, the Liturgy of the Church, the Missal, and the Breviary. "For the rest,

²⁰Francis, The Writings, pp. 14-19.

as Celano puts it, 'he left empty ornaments and round-about methods of speech and everything belonging to pomp and to display to those who are ready to perish; for his part he cared not for the bark, but for the pith; not for the shell but for the nut; not for the multiple, but for the one only sovereign good.'"²¹

His way-of-life he attempted to incorporate into his Rule, the first approved verbally by Innocent III on April 23, 1209.²² This Rule, as the Order rapidly grew, was considered to be too strict to be applicable. On his return from the Holy Land, Francis was asked to write a new Rule. Angered by the dissention in the Order and upset over the manner of its development, Francis resigned as Minister-General and retired to Saint Mary of the Angels to revise the Rule. This second Rule, briefer and considerably modified from the first, was approved by a Papal Bull on November 25, 1223.²³ Francis was distressed over the loss of the ideal, but practical considerations prevailed.

And yet, strangely, the ideal remained a potent force to inspire the exceptional. Francis' life became "conformed unto Christ" in impact.²⁴

²¹Ibid., p. xv.

²²Ibid., pp. 31-64. Also see Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, pp. 205-226.

²³Ibid., pp. 64-74. Also see Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, pp. 228-234.

²⁴Francis, The Little Flowers, p. 1.

IV. Foundation-Stones: Poverty-Humility

The world still admires this "experiment in Christian living so fascinating and so courageous" which Francis inaugurated. What other personality took upon himself such a task: to assimilate the teachings of Christ, to live always in close touch with Him, to set out simply and fearlessly to imitate Christ and to obey His every command. To Francis, however, it was the most natural thing in the world. It was his duty.

Once, late in his life, his friars pressured him to break the rule of poverty at least enough to allow the possession of books.

Brother Leo, a close companion of Francis, tells it this way:

"The most holy father was unwilling that his friars should be desirous of knowledge and books, but he willed and preached to them that they should desire to be founded on holy Humility, and to imitate pure Simplicity, holy Prayer, and our Lady Poverty, on which the saints and first friars did build. And this, he used to say, was the only safe way to one's own salvation and the edification of others, since Christ, to whose imitation we are called, showed and taught us this alone by word and example alike."²⁵

These four "foundation-stones," as Moorman calls them, compose the basis of the "Franciscan Way." They are the essence of what he stood for.

Poverty appears to be the most characteristic element of Francis and the Lesser brothers. Yet, it is in no way first in his teachings. It follows naturally from the others, however. Humility is usually the first element emphasized. A friar is to ask nothing for himself.

²⁵Quoted in Moorman, op. cit., p. 33.

If he does not, poverty is bound to follow. It is said that Francis was always embarrassed at the sight of someone in a worse economic state than his own. He would give even the clothes off his back to such a person. The words "for the love of God" would elicit from him a response to almost any request.²⁶ The words were holy to him, sacred objects demanding an affirmative response.

The friars were to make no demands upon society. If men were kind to them they were to accept the kindness. If men were rough with them they were to accept such treatment in the same manner that the kindness was accepted. They were expected to be the poorest and humblest, to be identified with the outcaste, the diseased, and the unlovable, to be despised yet patient in all situations. Perfect joy is in suffering yet enduring, being tormented yet loving, being persecuted yet joyful. They were to be simple men subject to all. Each man was to beg for his food, a difficult initiation in courage and obedience. Each man was to live among and serve the lepers, a frightening test of humility. The easier the response of the friar, the more merit he was to receive. And always the example of Francis was before them, begging and serving, encouraging and admonishing.

Francis emphasized the subjection of the Order to the authority of the Church. The friars were never to rival the local priests. They were forbidden to preach without the consent of the priest of the parish. The lowliest, most ignorant priest was to be treated with

²⁶Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, p. 48.

utmost respect and honor. Even if a friar could not consent to a priest's demands or actions, or that of one of his brothers, he was never to separate himself but to accept whatever punishment was dealt out to him. Yet, in this way a friar's conscience was served.

Humility also explains Francis attitude toward scholarship. Within fifty years the Franciscans became the most learned body of men in the world. But this was totally opposed to Francis' wishes. In the first place learning was incompatible with absolute poverty. They would have to possess books to study them. Further, Francis was convinced that scholarship led almost inevitably to pride. It put one into a position of superiority and made it difficult for a man to mingle with the ignorant and depraved. Francis even felt that a learned man upon entering the Order ought to somehow strip himself of his learning in order to be acceptable to Christ, even as men shed themselves of other possessions.

Everything that could impair or endanger absolute Humility was to be resisted. Pride, self-satisfaction, the applause of men would not allow any friar to be complacent, but demanded an active defense against such evils. Total honesty and confession were means of their refutation.

No friar was to provide for himself for tomorrow even to the extent of accepting in alms only enough for one day. Like all Francis' teachings this is, of course, Scripturally inspired. With Francis, however, this was extended to cover even such items as not soaking dried beans overnight in preparation for meals on the next day. Many

friars continued this custom for a long time after Francis' death.

It was Francis intention that no friar should possess anything but a habit, a cord, and an under-garment, as the Rule allows. Then why was this not enforced in his lifetime? Brother Richard gives us the answer in The Mirror of Perfection:

And because he feared dissension between himself and the friars, he was not willing to argue with them, but reluctantly yielded to their wishes, and asked pardon of God. But in order that the words which the Lord had put into his mouth for the guidance of the friars should not pass undeeded, he resolved to observe them himself, and by so doing to obtain his reward from God. At length he found contentment in this, and his soul received comfort.²⁷

In this way the humble Saint of Assisi makes real the meaning of true humility.

V. Foundation-Stones: Simplicity-Prayer

Important as Humility is as a fundamental quality of life, Francis placed Simplicity on a level with it. His life was based, for example, on the simplest possible interpretation of the Gospels and of the teachings of Christ. The most obvious sense of any saying was good enough. To our complex attitude this may seem naive and even absurd. It was not to Francis.

Simplicity, in all of its ramifications, demanded that the friars run the risk of being taken in and abused. They were expected to act on impulse and not on any calculated forethought. Such an innocent attitude was ready-made for fraud. The fact that it happened

²⁷Ibid., p. 16.

did not bother Francis. The attitude and action of the friar was the aspect of greatest import. Besides, if they owned nothing there was nothing that could be taken from them. In Francis' teaching even the cloak he wore belonged to the man poorer than he was. Francis had been only caring for it for such a one in the name of God. Even a New Testament could be given away and merit obtained.²⁸

Such an attitude frequently embarrassed his followers, especially if he were asked to contribute his cloak for the offering. They also never knew when such impulses that would make him naked or hungry would occur. Usually, one was assigned to watch Francis. Even in illness he would give his coverings away or repent for accepting nourishment. It is perhaps best explained by realizing that he was willing to give his life away for his Lord.

Simplicity also demanded of the friars that they seek no privileges for themselves. They were to content themselves with whatever opportunities God gave them. They were never to ask for special consideration, neither from Rome or anywhere else. If they were not received in any place, they were to flee and go elsewhere.

In all of this there is no distinction to be made between the "deserving" and the "undeserving." All who asked were to be given what there was available. All cities, towns, and villages they approached were to be treated in the same manner. There is no judgment, in this sense, in Francis. This element is left to God's grace.

²⁸For an example see: Ibid., p. 51.

The materialism of the church and of society is also rejected. Francis knew the evils involved. Simplicity united with Poverty demanded no use of material things, including money. In penance for touching money one friar was to carry it in his mouth outside the friary and lay it on a heap of ass's dung.²⁹ Nor were the friars to build houses for themselves. Simple shed-like, humble huts would do.³⁰

Francis' life was wholly absorbed in God as is revealed in his night of prayer where he repeated over and over only the words, "My God and my all." His mystic, spiritual life is revealed in many of the legends and in his prayers and praises.³¹ The mystery of the divine, transcendent Being engulfed him. He could not pass a church without entering it and praying. But often it was on impulse that he prayed. Or was it a compulsion? Occasionally, he was "suddenly visited by the Lord." Such moments were moments of ecstasy for him. At such times he was driven to pray, regardless of his location or the conditions of the situation. At such time he was often unaware of what went on around him.

His greatest moments of prayer were his mountain-top experiences or the times when he was alone in the woods. He would steal away from his companions to be alone. As already noted it was at such

²⁹Ibid., p. 28.

³⁰Ibid., p. 19ff.

³¹Francis, The Writings, pp. 137-176. Also see Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, pp. 157-168.

a time that he received the stigmata. Often such prayers lasted all night, often not exhausting but rather exhilarating him. Yet, he prayed anywhere, and often. By such prayer he was encouraged or made bold. And such prayer, he suggests to his disciples, helps a man to live up to the Rules of the Order and in the example of Christ.

Such a way condemned Francis to a life of hardship and suffering. Yet, in it he found joy. He had no consideration for himself, even for his health, which resulted in years of pain before he died. His body was a broken wreck, ravaged by blindness, disease, and emaciation. But this could not quench his spirit. He was following his Lord.

VI. The Natural World

One note needs to be appended to this consideration of Francis, especially in recognition of the fascination the devoted have for Francis' view of nature. Popular lives of Francis emphasize this side of his life.³²

It is true that Francis acknowledged all parts of nature as his brothers in Creation. For example, in "the Canticle of the Sun" he calls the Sun, the Wind, the Fire, "Brother;" he calls the Moon and the Water, "Sister;" and he calls the Earth his "Mother." Even death is "our Sister."³³ He is said to have preached to the birds with

³²For example Elizabeth Goudge, My God and My All (New York: Coward-McCann, 1959).

³³Francis, Saint Francis of Assisi, p. 161.

amazing effect.³⁴ Following Francis' example, a brother Anthony of Padua preached to the fish of the sea in order to convince heretics to return to the catholic fold.³⁵ The heretics were, of course, converted.

Francis did have "an all-embracing love for every creature," for all things had the same origin as himself. It is in his reverence for God that he loved God's creatures so much. They, too, were God's handiwork. They were mute worshippers of the Almighty. With Augustine and with the Old Testament he sings also, "Thy whole creation speaks Thy praise." He even wanted laws passed that the larks would not be harmed and that men should be compelled to feed all the birds and animals on Christmas Day.³⁷

The most startling story has to do with the wolf of Gubbio (Agobio) who is converted by Francis and becomes a good Franciscan, even to the extent of begging from door to door.³⁸ When it died two years later it was greatly missed in the city for it continually reminded the people of the sanctity of Saint Francis, the Poor Saint of Assisi.

In our brief consideration of the life and teachings of Saint Francis, it quickly becomes clear that he did not intentionally have disciples. He did not seek them. His followers came to him because

³⁴Francis, The Little Flowers, p. 49ff. ³⁵Ibid., p. 117ff.

³⁶Goudge, op. cit., p. 197. ³⁷Goudge, op. cit., p. 199.

³⁸Francis, The Little Flowers, p. 64ff.

of the impact of his example, of his life. This life was in turn a response to his visions, and an expression of his sensitivity to the contradictions of his day. His life was a result of concentration on certain aspects of the teachings of Christ. It was a ministry of living and not of teaching.

The institutionalizing of his Order was a distortion of the center of Francis efforts, especially in relation to the ideals of humility, poverty, and simplicity. We may reject in these the Catholic emphasis on merit, but we cannot reject the emphasis on attitude and motive. These are Jesus' emphases as well. It is not humility but the danger of pride, it is not poverty but the danger of wealth, it is not simplicity but the danger of complexity, that is really emphasized. We can recognize and understand the problem of Francis in this regard, as well as his solution. But it was not institutionally "practical." Fortunately, for our ideal he continued to live according to his own understanding of Scripture. We appreciate the lack of pomp in Saint Francis. We weep with him at the loss of ideals. We recognize, in essence, the loss of that power which is always, ultimately, sacred.

Søren Kierkegaard was an exponent of an alternative solution to the problems of religious existence. He too pointed to the loss of that power which is a sign of the dissolution of the sacred, even within Christianity. His approach, however, was entirely different from that of Saint Francis.

CHAPTER VI

A PASSIONATE DECEPTION

As long as the clergy were exalted, sacrosanct in the eyes of men, Christianity continued to be preached in all its severity. For even if the clergy did not take it too strictly, people dared not argue with the clergy, and they could quite well lay on the burden and dare to be severe.

But gradually, as the nimbus faded away, the clergy got into the position of themselves being controlled. So there was nothing to do but to water down Christianity. And so they continued to water it down till in the end they achieved perfect conformity with an ordinary worldly run of ideas -- which were proclaimed as Christianity. That is more or less Protestantism as it is now.

The good thing is that it is no longer possible to be severe to others if one is not so toward oneself. Only someone who is really strict with himself can dare nowadays to proclaim Christianity in its severity, and even then things may go badly for him.¹

To move so directly from Saint Francis to Kierkegaard may seem, at first sight, to be an insane or an impossible move. Actually, in doing this we skip over the Renaissance and the Reformation, both historically and geographically. The Renaissance, with its seat in Florence, in Tuscany just north of Umbria, is, of course, not a distant movement from Saint Francis, neither in time nor space. The Reformation, with its "eye" in Germany, with its whirling storm-clouds scattering chaos over Europe is a more distant and a more disturbing series of events, politically as well as religiously.

Denmark sits on the other side of the hurricane. It felt the

¹Søren Kierkegaard, The Journals of Kierkegaard (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 205.

effects of both actions mildly and late, even as it felt mildly and late the effects of the French revolution. The only constant and immediate danger was from Prussia, especially with the development of nationalistic pride. Today Denmark is a land of people who are fairly educated, and with extremely democratic principles.² It was not always so. Denmark also has the unique distinction of having had at one time the only written law in the civilized world that took absolutism to its last consequences. This was the "King's Law" of Frederick III, about 1661. In that law supreme spiritual, as well as political, authority was claimed by the king. The reversal of that situation began during Kierkegaard's lifetime with the Schleswig-Holstein Question and the new constitution of Christian VIII.³

Copenhagen, on the island of Zealand, was from early times the center of government for Denmark. The city sprawls across the low lying ground between the sea and a series of fresh water lakes. The island is also noted for being from remote antiquity a religious sanctuary. Long ago the Vikings, one of the causes of feudal monarchies in Western Europe, had been in turn conquered by the Christians. The Dane have been Lutheran-Evangelical Reformed -- since 1536. The confiscated property of the Catholic church brought financial stability to the government.

It was a state church. It made for a comfortable, but not a

²See Encyclopaedia Britannica under items Denmark, Copenhagen, Zealand, 13th edition (New York: 1910).

³See Encyclopaedia Britannica under Schleswig-Holstein Question.

dynamic, clergy. Fortunately, there was also a great amount of religious toleration. Bishop Mynster (1775-1854), Kierkegaard's psychological antagonist, was the church's greatest leader. Kierkegaard became its greatest philosopher-theologian, as well as its most outspoken critic.

Two other events need only to be specified to explain the situation into which Kierkegaard moved. The first is the great agricultural depression, with the enormous fall in the price of corn all over Europe. This may have accidentally helped to make Kierkegaard's father wealthy and thus gave Søren economic security all his life, with only psychological reservations to be noted until near his death. The second is the philosophy of Hegel, whose influence permeated the thought of the whole of Europe. Kierkegaard fell under its influence, then rebelled and became its earliest and most brilliant antagonist.

Such a brief sketch leaves much to be desired. Some of the neglected details will, hopefully, be made clear in the pages that follow. In a sense, in moving from Saint Francis to Kierkegaard we make not only an historical and a geographical leap, but a personality leap, as well. We move from someone who attempted to be -- and was -- what he appeared to be, to someone who did not attempt to be -- and was not -- what he appeared to be. For Kierkegaard was, and gladly admitted to being, a deceiver; a conscious, premeditated, and deliberate deceiver of his fellow man. But that deliberate deception was for a high purpose. It was to make clear what Christianity really is, to Christendom.

I. His Life

Søren Aabye Kierkegaard was born on the fifth of May, 1813, the last of seven children.⁴ His father, who had lived his youth in poverty as a shepherd on a Jutland heath, was now a retired and independently wealthy merchant. The agricultural depression already mentioned, along with the debt Denmark owed for the Napoleonic wars, bankrupted the state. To offset this the government issued a huge number of bank notes which caused a complete collapse of credit. The only security that did not shrink was the "Royal Loan," which was held chiefly by foreign governments. Michael Kierkegaard had his entire fortune in these stocks. He became, therefore, richer than ever.

Surprisingly, this added to his already guilt-ridden conscience. On that Jutland heath years ago, in his anguish, in his hunger, he had cursed God. He had been only twelve years old. The rest of his life was spent in expecting an answer to that curse. In such anxiety every physical blessing was only the promise of a worse fate yet to come. Not only that, but before the year's mourning had been up after the death of his first wife he married his servant girl, and their first child was born four months and eleven days later. His intense religiosity buried this item deep within to add its torment, in secret, to his soul.

⁴The basis of this "Life" is (a) Johannes Hohlenberg, Søren Kierkegaard (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954) (b) Walter Lowrie, A Short Life of Kierkegaard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942) (c) Kierkegaard, The Journals.

In an attempt to restore his relationship to God, Michael Kierkegaard passed on his intenseness in religion, and, in a sense, his guilt, to this last son, Søren. The father had concluded that he would outlive all of his children. This was to be his punishment. Søren, his last, would be his sacrifice of reconciliation. The early deaths of Søren Michael, the fifth child and, three years later, of Maren Kristine seemed to confirm his gloomy prediction. A few years later, three others died in quick succession, along with his wife.

Søren Kierkegaard often thought of himself as "on the verge" of insanity, perhaps out of that melancholy, out of that sense of guilt handed down. His elder brother Peter Christian was committed to an asylum after having risen to the rank of bishop of the church. Unfortunately, he did not have Søren's dialectical mind to save him. He fell victim to his father's delusion that he had committed the unpardonable sin.

Two other items need to be noted in Kierkegaard's childhood. One was his clothing, of which his father allowed no variation at all. He wore clumsy shoes, never boots as the other boys wore, and his coat had a short skirt on it. His companions called him "choir-boy" because he looked like the poor church-school children who sang in church. The other was his unusual "walks" with his father.

His home did not offer many diversions, and as he almost never went out, he early grew accustomed to occupying himself with his own thoughts. His father was a very severe man, apparently dry and prosaic, but under his frieze coat he concealed a glowing imagination which even old age could not dim. When occasionally Johannes asked his permission to go out, he generally refused to give it, though once in a while proposed instead that Johannes

should take his hand and walk up and down the room. At first glance this would seem a poor substitute, and yet, as with the frieze coat, there was something totally different concealed beneath it. The offer was accepted, and it was left entirely to Johannes to determine where they should go. So they went out of doors to a nearby castle in Spain, or out to the seashore, or about the streets, wherever Johannes wished to go, for his father was equal to anything. While they went up and down the room his father described all that they saw; they greeted passers by, carriages rattled past them and drowned his father's voice; the cake-woman's cakes were more enticing than ever. He described so accurately, so vividly, so explicitly even to the least details, everything that was known to Johannes and so fully and perspicuously what was unknown to him, that after half an hour of such a walk with his father he was as much overwhelmed and fatigued as if he had been a whole day out of doors.⁵

Johannes, or Kierkegaard, absorbed this unique descriptive power as he also absorbed the unique analytic aspects of his father's mind revealed in those conversations between his father and other men which Søren was allowed to hear. He concludes his own description of his youth in this fashion:

. . .What other children get through the fascination of poetry and the surprises of fairy-tales, he got through the repose of intuition and the alternations of dialectic. This was the child's joy, it became the boy's game, it became the youth's delight. So his life had a rare continuity; it did not know the various transitions which commonly mark the different periods of growth. When Johannes grew older he had no toys to lay aside, for he had learned to play with that which was to be the serious business of his life, and yet it lost thereby nothing of its allurements.⁶

In this manner, he considered himself old when he was born. He knew none of the immediacy of childhood. He was reflective throughout. His wit was his sole defense.

⁵Kierkegaard, The Journals, p. 80.

⁶Ibid., p. 82.

In Kierkegaard's twenty-second year, the year that he marks as the end of his childhood, he experienced what he termed "the great earthquake." This was probably a blazing revelation of his father's true experience of guilt, and its causes. Kierkegaard was inwardly torn apart, and yet somehow freed. It was an exhilarating feeling. Yet, the passing of that secret caused him untold agonies in love. Christianity seemed inhumanly cruel, full of only suffering and punishment. He wanted to give it up, but he could not.

Then he met Regina with whom he fell deeply in love. Before the situation between them became serious, however, his father died, leaving his estate to his two remaining sons: to Peter, the eldest, the sheep in folds of Christendom, and to Søren, the prodigal. In spite of the fact that his father had died, a fact denying the father's determined idea of outliving his sons, Søren still expected to be dead before he became thirty-four. That expectancy plagued him.

One promise to his father still remained to be met: to complete his studies in theology. This he did after an interval of concentrated labor. He took his degree on July 3, 1840. He followed this with a trip to Jutland to see his father's childhood home. Regina went with him in his thought.

Regina Olsen became, for Kierkegaard and for the whole world, the object of a curious love story. For Kierkegaard, at the point of marriage after an emotionally-charged courtship, broke off his engagement without giving a reason, and fled to Germany. He had given himself to her in all honesty and without reservation, but he had not

given all. Apparently he could not marry while necessarily retaining a secret from her, and he could not reveal that secret. What that secret was we can only guess; he never explains it anywhere. That he still loved her was obvious. He devoted all of his literary works to her. In history their names are inextricably united even though she finally married another, and he went on his own solitary, tortuous way. He was Hamlet, unable to yield his love.

In those last few hectic tormented years, he had been writing, almost as if to assuage his fevered brow in work. In 1843 he published, Either/Or, and along with it Two Edifying Discourses; then Fear and Trembling and Repetition. In 1845 he published Stages on Life's Way and, in 1844 and 1846, his two great attacks on the Hegelian system, Philosophical Fragments (Scraps) and Concluding Unscientific Postscript. This last work he thought as his last work. He would die, or he would retire to a small country parsonage and lose himself in that work. Or so he thought. It was not to be.

It was only that one phase of his literary life was over, the philosophical, the aesthetic, the ethical. He turned eventually to attack Christendom. An affair with "The Corsair," a local newspaper began his suffering. It had been praising his work while tormenting other good men in the community, so he challenged it to ridicule him. It did, lampooning his works, his clothing, and his physical shape. It tore at him in article after article, sketch after sketch.⁷ Instead

⁷Some of these sketches are printed in Hohlenberg, op. cit., between pages 159-187.

of being his final work, the Postscript became a turning point. He hurled himself with a fury into the production of religious works. All that had gone before had been part of his "education."

In 1847 he was thirty-four and he was still alive. He had been very free with his funds up till then and he felt that he must live more frugally. He could not. In 1855, at the age of forty-two, he died with his last money in his hands.

In 1846, he had published a book which reviewed his historical moment. In The Present Age, he chastizes it as an age "without passion," but the events of 1848 proved him wrong. Easter of that year broke his own spirit of reserve. On Wednesday, April 19, he wrote: "My whole being is changed. My reserve and self-isolation is broken -- I must speak. Lord give they grace."⁸ In the heat of that conviction, that religious experience, he wrote The Sickness Unto Death, an analysis of despair, and Training in Christianity, an examination of some of the difficulties in becoming a Christian. These are considered his masterpieces as a Christian author. Externally, the political situation had a tremendous effect on the lives of the people. The Schleswig-Holstein situation constituted a threat from the Prussian armies and resulted in a limited constitutional monarchy. The ideas contained in the French Revolution finally reached Denmark.

In 1848, Kierkegaard had also written a most revelatory book on his own view of himself. But The Point of View for My Work as an Author did not appear until 1859, four years after his death. It was

⁸Kierkegaard, The Journals, p. 137.

his "report to history."

After two years of peace (1852-1854) Kierkegaard launched his famed, Attack Upon Christendom, in a series of twenty-one newspaper articles, each one more scathing than the last. Bishop Mynster had died. Martensen replaced him. Kierkegaard attacked both men. His first article stunned Copenhagen. No one knew how to answer him. Critics were ignored. The attack widened as Kierkegaard took on the whole of Christendom. He forced upon himself the role he sought.

A little pinch of spice! That is to say: Here a man must be sacrificed, he is needed to impart a particular taste to the rest. These are the correctives.

. . .A little pinch of spice! Humanly speaking, what a painful thing to be thus sacrificed, to be the little pinch of spice! But on the other hand God knows well the man whom He elects to employ in this way, and so He also knows how, in the inward understanding of it, to make it so blessed a thing for him to be sacrificed, that among the thousands of divers voices which express, each in its own way, the same thing, his also will be heard, and perhaps especially his, which is truly de profundis, proclaiming: God is love.⁹

Only death could follow. He was buried a Lutheran by the church.

II. Without Authority

As it is with Saint Francis, so it is also with Kierkegaard; an understanding of his life is crucial to an understanding of his "place" in Christianity. The work is an extension of the man, not the facade Kierkegaard presented to his community, but the man he was in history. The facade is essential for he was as he said, "without

⁹Lowrie, op. cit., p. 260.

authority."

He attempted to beguile his readers into a realization of the truth. In his early works he hid behind a great many idealized pseudonyms. This presented him with the advantage of approaching a single question from many vantage points. It also tended to confound the reader as to who was really speaking. Was Kierkegaard representing himself in such variegated views, or was he not? The fact that he visited the theatre and continually was seen wandering about town created the impression of a wealthy, lazy, ne'er-do-well. It defied the fact of a serious mind and an earnest endeavor. He maintained that impression to keep his readers off guard.

His intention was to explore the situation as it was, and to show that Christendom was a far cry from Christianity. His method was to seek to win his reader to the truth by the truth in the arguments themselves. It was not always this clear-cut. In The Point of View (1848) he stated:

The contents of this little book affirm, then, what I truly am as an author, that I am and was a religious author, that the whole of my work as an author is related to Christianity, to the problem 'of becoming a Christian', with a direct or indirect polemic against the monstrous illusion we call Christendom, or against the illusion that in such a land as ours all are Christians of a sort.¹⁰

All that had gone before, then, were religious writings. Each article was to be reread in the light of this statement. The deception

¹⁰Søren Kierkegaard, The Point of View for My Work as An Author (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 5.

was unmasked, the pseudonyms set aside. Even the strange, sensuous seduction in Either/Or was religious. From then on he spoke in his own name, on his own authority, but still "without authority." It is only the deception that had been cast aside.

He could not explain his work as an authority wholly, because he could not explain the inwardness of it, his God-relationship. This inwardness, this subjectivity is crucial. All decision comes down to the individual. All decision is individual, like a disease it can only be contracted by a person. Misunderstanding is, therefore, expected. No one is to be excepted from such suffering.

But to whom was he writing? Certainly it was not to those who would misunderstand him. It was rather to that person whom Kierkegaard called "my reader."

. . .that individual whom it seeks, toward whom, as it were, it stretches out its arms; that individual who is benevolent enough to let himself be found, benevolent enough to receive it, whether in the moment of meeting it found him happy and confident, or "melancholy and thoughtful." On the other hand, insofar, as, by being published, it in a stricter sense remains quiet without leaving the place, I let my eye rest on it for a little while. It stood there, then, like an insignificant little blossom in its hiding place in the great forest, sought for neither for its showiness nor its fragrance nor its food value. But I saw also, or believed that I saw, how the bird whom I call my reader, suddenly fixed his eye upon it, flew down to it, plucked it off, and took it to himself. And when I had seen this, I saw nothing more.¹¹

¹¹Søren Kierkegaard, Edifying Discourses (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 1.

III. Christianity And Christendom

The Concluding Unscientific Postscript is the hinge on which the work of Kierkegaard turns. As he said, it "constitutes as I have already said, the turning point in my whole work as an author. It presents the 'Problem,' that of becoming a Christian."¹² This is especially difficult because one is already a Christian. . . "of a sort."

There is a difference, therefore, between Christianity as revealed in the New Testament and Christendom as revealed in the state Church. It is the difference between transcendence and immanence, or between paradox and "the system."

To make this clearer, there is the need for some conception of the "stages" Kierkegaard talked about in his earlier works. First there is the Aesthetic stage, as symbolized by Johannes, the seducer in Either/Or. The Ethical stage is symbolized by Judge William in the Or part of the same book. The third stage, the Religious stage, is expressed in the book, Fear and Trembling. These stages do not form a progression, nor are they realized in a person in any particular order. Actually, all of them may be realized in the same individual at one time. They are, therefore, more like levels of personality than like stages. Each or all may find expression.

The Religious stage is really two stages, as is explained in the Postscript. These are called Religiousness A and Religiousness B.

¹²Kierkegaard, The Point of View, p. 41.

Religiousness A is not easily separated from the Ethical stage.

Surprisingly, Christendom is not even this. It has been forced back into aesthetics by science and learning. Religiousness B is Christianity, and it requires a leap of faith. The Ethical stage, in a sense, brings about Religiousness A. Either a person rises to Religiousness A or falls back into the Aesthetic stage. It depends on whether a person is devoted to universal or to relative ends. The relative is to be subordinated to the universal. The leap to Religiousness A comes out of the questions that are bound to arise in ethical discussions.

The most distinguishing factor of religious life is suffering. Inwardness and suffering bring conversion. Suffering brings out devotion to the universal or to the Absolute. But the universal is determined by its relation to the Absolute and not vice-versa. Therein is the risk we discussed earlier in relation to Abraham. Therein faith is realized. And this uncertainty brings a greater degree of inwardness or subjectivity and faith. In this context Kierkegaard's statement that truth is subjectivity is more easily understood.

Also Kierkegaard's purpose is here more easily understood.

. . . My purpose is to make it difficult to become a Christian, yet not more difficult than it is, nor to make it difficult for stupid people, and easy for clever pates, but qualitatively difficult, and essentially difficult for every man equally, for essentially it is equally difficult for every man to relinquish his understanding and his thinking, and to keep his soul fixed upon the absurd; it is comparatively more difficult for a man if he has much understanding -- if one will keep in mind that not everyone who has lost his understanding over Christianity thereby proves that he has any.¹³

¹³Søren Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 495.

Religiousness A can exist in paganism. It is natural. It can be done in perfect comfort. And it is task enough for most men. But it is not Christianity as it is revealed in the suffering of the early church. It is not absurd. It is not paradoxical. It does not demand great faith.

Of the Christian clergyman he says:

. . .A Christian Clergyman who does not know how, with the passion of existential effort, to keep himself and the congregation in awe by proclaiming that the paradox cannot and shall not be understood, who does not affirm precisely that the task is to hold fast to this and to endure the crucifixion of the understanding, but has understood everything speculatively -- that clergyman is comic.¹⁴

Of the relation of understanding to faith, he says:

. . .One gives up, as he says, the understanding in order to believe. . .but then he acquires a higher understanding, so much higher that by virtue of it he comports himself as an incomparably clever seer, etc. But it is always a questionable thing to derive profit or apparent profit out of one's religiousness. Because an individual gives up his understanding for faith and believes against the understanding, he should not think meanly of the understanding, nor suddenly arrogate to himself a glittering distinction within the total compass of the understanding; for after all a higher understanding is also an understanding.¹⁵

Of the coming of the eternal in time, that is in history, he says:

. . .A man in accordance with his possibility is eternal and becomes conscious of this in time. This is the contradiction within immanence. But that that which in accordance with its nature is eternal comes into existence in time, is born, grows up, and dies -- this is a breach with all thinking.¹⁶

This is the paradox, religious sphere, the sphere of faith. It is believed often against the understanding. It is no wonder that it

¹⁴Ibid., p. 500.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 501.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 513.

is difficult to be Christian, and therefore, there are perhaps only a few of them in Christendom.

Not only this, however, but a man only becomes a Christian "in the fullness of time." Childhood is not the age for becoming a Christian. The age of maturity is the time when it is decided whether a man would be a Christian or not. The religiousness of childhood is the universal, the abstract, and the foundation for all subsequent religiousness. But it takes a mature decision, a leap of faith to become Christian. Even baptism cannot be the decisive factor. Any rare exceptions are a stroke of luck. In Kierkegaard's technical language:

The decision lies in the subject. The appropriation is the paradoxical inwardness which is specifically different from all other inwardness. The thing of being a Christian is not determined by the what of Christianity but by the how of the Christian. This how can only correspond with one thing, the absolute paradox. There is therefore no vague talk to the effect that being a Christian is to accept, and to accept, and to accept quite differently (all of them purely rhetorical and fictitious definitions); but to believe is specifically different from all other appropriation and inwardness. Faith is the objective uncertainty due to the repulsion of the absurd held fast by the passion of inwardness, which in this instance is intensified to the utmost degree. This formula fits only the believer, no one else, not a lover, not an enthusiast, not a thinker, but simply and solely the believer who is related to the absolute paradox.¹⁷

IV. That Individual

One of the intriguing elements of Kierkegaard's thought is his criticism of philosophy, the whole body of post-Christian metaphysics

¹⁷Ibid., p. 540.

that has separated thought from existence. It is also an attack against aesthetic humanism. The symbol for both faults is what Kierkegaard calls the "Goetheo-Hegelian" world, an illusory existence that prevents man from seeing the real problems of faith and doubt.

The positive side of this critical attack is in Kierkegaard's conception of "the individual." It becomes also a central religious concept, and finally Kierkegaard's conception of himself.

"The individual" is the category through which, from a religious point of view, our age, our race and its history must pass. And the man who stood and fell at Thermopylae was not as convinced as I am, who stand at the narrow pass "the individual." It was his duty to prevent the hordes from forcing their way through that narrow pass; if they got through he was lost. My duty is, at any rate at first sight, much easier and seems to place me in far less danger of being trodden down; as though I were an unimportant servant who, if possible, was to help the masses trying to go through the narrow pass, "the individual," through which, be it noted, no one can ever go without first becoming "the individual." Yet had I to crave an inscription on my grave I would ask for none other than "the individual" -- and even if it is not understood now, then in truth it will be.¹⁸

It is blasphemy, according to Kierkegaard, to believe that man may be saved by identification with a set of external arrangements, even if that system be Hegel's vast dialectical view of history, that "biography of God." Any such system passes over individuals in favor of social, religious, or political institutions. In such a view what is a man's responsibility? What need has he for integrity? Rather, his individuality is the one thing needful. He stands individually before God.

¹⁸Kierkegaard, The Journals, p. 133.

In this is explained Kierkegaard's disappointment in Luther's final rebellion against the Pope. Instead, what is needed is an inner rebellion in the light of man's responsibility before God. Kierkegaard felt himself to be the prophet of that inner reformation.

Kierkegaard thought that the category of "the individual" had been used only once before, by Socrates. He also felt that the world had gone so far along the road of reflection that Christianity would now have to stand or fall on that category. It is not to be treated lightly.

. . .I bind myself to make every man whom I can include in the category "the individual" into a Christian or rather, since no man can do that for another, I vouch for his becoming one. As "that individual" he is alone, alone in the whole world, alone -- before God: then it will be easy to obey. . . .The point is however, that this category cannot be taught; the use of it is an art, a moral task, and an art the exercise of which is always dangerous and at times might even require the life of the artist.¹⁹

In one sense this concept was a reaction against the political situation in 1847-48. There had been an attempt to stir up national pride in Denmark on the basis of its Nordic sagas and its great history. Such mass attempts, or any notion of group salvation, Kierkegaard thought of as a bitter poison. It could not meet the needs of the individual soul. The comfortable Church compromised to the State could not offer salvation either. In this Kierkegaard felt it stood out in sharpest contrast to the primitive Christian community.

The "crowd" is the coward's refuge in which a man will do that which he would never dare to do alone. In it he feels relieved of his

¹⁹Ibid., p. 134.

responsibility. In his individuality, on the other hand, isolated from the mass man allows the Eternal to accomplish amazing insight in him. This is the theme of Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing.²⁰

The "crowd" is the untruth. Only one individual in the light of God's judgment can win a race. This does not mean that all men cannot. It means rather that each must win it individually.

. . . He, the great Examiner, says that only one attains the goal. That means, every one can and every one should be this one -- but only one attains the goal. Hence where there is a multitude, a crowd, or where decisive significance is attached to the fact that there is a multitude, there it is sure that no one is working, living, striving for the highest aim, but only for one or another earthly aim; since to work for the eternal decisive aim is possible only where there is one, and to be this one which all can be is to let God be the helper -- the 'crowd' is the untruth.²¹

This is, of course, not "crowd" in the ordinary use of the term. "Crowd" stands for number, the numerical, the more than one in place of the one. In any such concept the individual (one) is last. "Crowd" is an abstraction; as Kierkegaard says, it "has no hands." But each individual has two hands for which he is responsible! Everyone in a crowd flees in cowardice from being an individual.

It takes no great talent to sway a crowd. "All that is needed is some talent, a certain dose of falsehood, and a little acquaintance with human passions."²² But a witness to the truth, supremely symbolized in Christ, deals only with individuals. In a crowd is no

²⁰Søren Kierkegaard, Purity of Heart is to Will One Thing (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).

²¹Kierkegaard, The Point of View, p. 112.

²²Ibid., p. 115.

truth and no authority.

In this can be seen Kierkegaard's contempt for the mass media, wherein an anonymous author can say what he would never dare to say as an individual, and what he says sways "the crowd." In his statement, in the media itself, and in "the crowd" no one assumes responsibility.

Nay, truth -- which abhors also this untruth of aspiring after broad dissemination as the one aim -- is not nimble on its feet. In the first place it cannot work by means of the fantastical means of the press, which is the untruth; the communicator of the truth can only be a single individual. And again the communication of it can only be addressed to the individual; for the truth consists precisely in that conception of life which is expressed by the individual. The truth can neither be communicated nor be received except as it were under God's eyes, not without God's help, not without God's being involved as the middle term, He himself being the Truth. It can therefore only be communicated by and received by 'the individual', which as a matter of fact can be every living man.²³

To honor every man is the truth; and this is to fear God and love one's neighbor. To recognize any "crowd" is, finally, to deny God. Every one who loves his neighbor, who really loves his neighbor, expresses "unconditional human equality." Everyone who admits his weakness and his imperfection and yet is aware of the task, to love one's neighbor, is also aware of what human equality is. To love one's neighbor is self-denial. To love the crowd is the untruth, for the crowd is the untruth; it is the way to material power, and the way to temporal and earthly advantages of all sorts.

Every man in a crowd is an individual and, therefore, can become an individual. No one is excluded, except he who excludes himself by joining a crowd. Eternal truth lies in "the individual."

²³Ibid., p. 117.

It is the category of the spirit and of spiritual awakening. It is the decisive Christian category.

V. Genius Or Apostle?

Is Kierkegaard a Genius or an Apostle? This is a question that he put to himself while at the same time analyzing the distinctions between the two categories. The question arose out of the confused state of Christianity at that moment.

What, exactly, have the errors of exegesis and philosophy done in order to confuse Christianity, and how have they confused Christianity? Quite briefly and categorically, they have simply forced back the sphere of paradox-religion into the sphere of aesthetics, and in consequence have succeeded in bringing Christian terminology to such a pass that terms which, so long as they remain within their sphere, are qualitative categories, can be put to almost any use as clever expressions. If the sphere of paradox-religion is abolished, or explained away in aesthetics, an Apostle becomes neither more nor less than a genius, and then -- good night, Christianity! Esprit and the Spirit, revelation and originality, a call from God and genius, all end by meaning more or less the same thing.²⁴

The confusion blurs the distinction and makes any answer difficult. First, the distinctions must be established, and only then can the question be answered. Saint Paul, for example, is an Apostle. Yet, a preacher speaks of his brilliance, of his profundity, of his beautiful similies, that is, -- of his aestheticism. These items are actually a matter of indifference to Paul's message. They are spoken of because a cleric feels he must say something good about him. This

²⁴Søren Kierkegaard, The Present Age and Of the Difference Between A Genius and An Apostle (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 89.

happens because the church remembers no standard by which to judge him. Yet, he is an Apostle and not a Genius.

Kierkegaard believed that there is a qualitative difference between a Genius and an Apostle: they are definitions which belong to their own spheres, the sphere of immanence and the sphere of transcendence:

. . . (1) Genius may, therefore, have something new to bring forth, but what it brings forth disappears again as it becomes assimilated by the human race, just as the difference 'genious' disappears as soon as one thinks of eternity; the Apostle has, paradoxically, something new to bring, the newness of which, precisely because it is essentially paradoxical, and not an anticipation in relation to the development of the race, always remains, just as an Apostle remains an Apostle in all eternity, and no eternal immanence puts him on the same level as other men, because he is essentially, paradoxically different. (2) Genius is what it is of itself, i.e. through that which it is in itself; an Apostle is what he is by his divine authority. (3) Genius has only an immanent teleology; the Apostle is placed as absolute paradoxical teleology.²⁵

Thought belongs to the sphere of immanence. Faith and the paradox are a qualitative sphere unto themselves. Genius is a natural qualification: genius is born. It is genius before any specific relation of its particular gifts to God exists. It remains genius if there is no relation. What he offers will eventually be assimilated by the race. What he offers is, therefore, never really paradoxical.

This is not so with an Apostle. No man is born an Apostle. "An Apostle is a man called and appointed by God, receiving a mission from him."²⁶ No potential possibility precedes the selection of an

²⁵Ibid., p. 91.

²⁶Ibid., p. 92.

Apostle. Every man is, therefore, as near being one as is any other man. Apostolic calling is a "paradoxical factor," standing outside of a man's personal identity. Becoming an Apostle does not change him, it merely sends him on a mission. This makes him paradoxically different from all other men for all eternity. That which he brings forth is always paradoxically new. It remains new. It can never be assimilated into the immanent.

Divine authority is the decisive factor. An Apostle is what he is by divine authority. That divine authority remains outside of himself. Therefore, I listen to Saint Paul only because he has divine authority, and for no other reason.

A Genius, on the other hand, is measured by what he produces, by its content and by its specific weight. His authority, such as it is, is transitory. It vanishes later in time. It is, therefore, immanent, whereas the authority of the Apostle is transcendent and eternal. The relation of a Genius to other men is a relation of essential equality, that is, of immanence. The relation of an Apostle to other men is a relation in faith, which is paradoxical and transcendent. The Apostle's words can only be believed, while a Genius may be understood. An Apostle has no proof of his authority. His statement is his only proof.

Genius lives in itself, following its own bent, regardless of its value to others. An Apostle lives teleologically in relation to others. This is his command and his authority in human terms. A Genius does not write "in order that." An Apostle always speaks

absolutely and paradoxically "in order that."

Therefore, Kierkegaard is no Apostle. He sees himself only as a Genius, under that Category a man born with particular gifts. He can claim, thereby, no divine authority. An Apostle is not to be admired, but listened to. A Genius is to be admired only as his work approximates truth.

VI. Dread And Despair

Dread and despair, as Kierkegaard saw them, are marks of man's glory, and not of his shame. Dread is the presupposition of inherited or "original" sin. The book The Concept of Dread is a psychological analysis of such sin. Man is aware of the precarious character of life itself. Man is often both attracted and repulsed by the same object of his attention. But dread has no object. There is "nothing" in possibilities as well as something. Out of man's freedom to become himself, to become the possibility that will define his life, comes sin. Either man denies his finitude and overstretches his freedom, or he denies his infinitude and identifies only with the bodily, the sensuous. When sin takes place man leaps into sin, but he must have some place to leap from. This is his precondition. Man produces dread. It is his own reaction to the possibility of freedom.

Dread, therefore, with the aid of faith, is educative. It reveals the deceptions of all finite aims. We are educated in the way of salvation by possibility, and not by reality. Dread becomes a saving factor. Thus, though sin is not explained, and perhaps cannot

be because it comes out of freedom, the preconditions for sin can be explored, and they reveal man's potential, man's glory. Dread suggests to man that all may not be well with him spiritually. Dread is not sin; between it and sin lies a chasm. A leap, a decisive action is required to sin. Psychology, therefore, may explain everything right up to the act of sin (the preconditions), it cannot explain sin itself.²⁷

The book The Sickness Unto Death is Kierkegaard's discussion of despair in the religious realm. In essence, despair is sin. Out of considerations on the death of Lazarus, Kierkegaard concludes that the death of the body is not regarded as the real death. It is death of the self (soul). But which is the self? It is that which relates itself to itself, a constituted affair established by God in man. So that relationship in man is not only related to itself but also to the higher Power. Yet everyone is conscious of some dis-relation in this cycle of relationship. This dis-relationship is what Kierkegaard means by despair. It is as internal as is dread. It has no external relation. Any despair over external things shows us that we are in despair over ourselves.

This dis-relationship within the self and toward the constituting Power is universal in man. It is not a defect. Its possibility

²⁷Some understanding of Kierkegaard's concept of "Repetition" would be helpful here both in relation to dread and to despair. We cannot go back after sinning; therefore, repetition. See Søren Kierkegaard, Repetition (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

implies that we are spiritual. Its actuality, however, is to destroy the self. Despair actualized then is the only sickness unto eternal death.

Because the self takes many forms, so does despair. Because the self is composed of a synthesis, as soul-body, finite-infinite, despair must be treated in paradoxical pairs as well. There is despair about finitude and infinitude, possibility and necessity, weakness and definance. When any of these potentials alone are realized, we have sin. Sin is, then, potentiated despair before God. Obviously, if a man does not recognize his existence before God his life is a waste. That man swings from one sin to its opposite is Kierkegaards own assertion:

. . . For so it is with men in this world: first a man sins from frailty and weakness; and then -- yes, then perhaps he learns to flee to God and to be helped by faith which saves from all sin; but of this we are not talking here -- then he despairs over his weakness and becomes, either a Pharisee who in despair manages to attain a certain legal righteousness, or he despairs and plunges again into sin.

The definition therefore certainly embraces every conceivable and actual form of sin; it certainly throws into relief the decisive fact that sin is despair (for sin is not the wildness of flesh and blood, but it is the spirit's consent thereto), and it is. . . before God.²⁸

The opposite of sin is not virtue, but faith. Virtue is a pagan view content with a mere human measure. Faith is a decisive Christian, and therefore transcendent, definition of the opposite of sin.

²⁸Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death (New York: Doubleday, 1954), p. 213.

Technically it stands this way:

Sin is: before God in despair not to will to be oneself, or before God in despair to will to be oneself.

Faith is: that the self in being itself and in willing to be itself is grounded transparently in God.²⁹

VII. The Offense

Existence is absurd, it is a paradox. It cannot be understood in Hegel's smooth mediation of opposites. In fact, it cannot be understood (a speculative grasp) at all. The contradictions are to be recognized. Paradox is inherent in existence. Kierkegaard's dialectic is therefore different from Hegel's. It is a dialogue, an enunciation of a different point of view. Existence resists reason. It will not be systemitized. It is denounced by reason, therefore, as "absurd."

In the religious realm, Kierkegaard speaks of the absurd, the paradox, the possibility of offense as a decisive criterion of Christianity, as its defense against speculation, and speculative systems. The essential paradox is in Christ.

Just as the concept 'faith' is a highly characteristic note of Christianity, so also is 'offence' a highly characteristic note of Christianity and stands in close relation to faith. The possibility of offence is the crossways, or it is like standing at the crossways. From the possibility of the offence a man turns either to offence or to faith.

Offence has essentially to do with the composite term God and man, or with the God-Man.³⁰

²⁹Ibid., p. 212, 213.

³⁰Soren Kierkegaard, Training in Christianity (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 82.

The problem is, of course, that man attempts to understand any apparent paradox. Once a paradox is understood it is no longer a paradox, and it was no true paradox to begin with. Faith is no longer required. But existence is a paradox, so that it requires faith in order to live. Christ is also a paradox. In him is contained the possibility of offense. Confronting him "a man turns either to offense or to faith."

Kierkegaard frames the problem in this fashion:

'The offence' in the strictest sense. . .has to do therefore with the God-Man, and it has two forms. It either has to do with loftiness -- one is offended at the fact that an individual man says of himself that he is God, or speaks in such a way as to betray this thought. . .or it has to do with lowliness -- that He who is God is this lowly man, suffering like a lowly man. . . .In the first form, the offence arises in such a way that I am not in the least offended at the lowliness of the man but at the fact that he wants me to believe that he is God. And if I believed the offence then arises from the other side, and consists in the fact that such a one as He should be God, this lowly, helpless man who when it comes to a test has no power to do anything.³¹

Furthermore, the scripture has something to say about the offense as a mere man who came in conflict with the historical order. It was not to be offended. Neither are we. The offense arises out of Jesus' protest against the claim of the natural order to be the truth. Further, he claims that he is the truth. It is contained in himself. Here the conflict and the questionings take place.

When the individual appeals to his God-relationship in opposition to the established order, it looks indeed as if he made himself more than a man. Nevertheless, he does not by any means do that; for he concedes that every man, absolutely every man has or should have for his part the same relationship to God.

³¹Ibid., p. 84.

. . . But the established order refuses to entertain the notion that it might consist of so loose an aggregation of millions of individuals each of which severally has his own God-relationship. The established order desires to be totalitarian, recognizing nothing over it, but having under it every individual, and judging every individual who is integrated in it. And 'that individual' (hin Enkelte), who expounds the most humble, but at the same time the most humane doctrine about what it means to be a man, the established order desires to terrify by imputing to him the guilt of blasphemy.³²

This view propounds a consideration that goes way back beyond the amphictyonic organization of Israel, to Abraham himself, and an individual relationship to God. It is not for Abraham alone, however, but for every man. It is no wonder that the "organization" was offended. The historical situation in relation to that man is gone. But Christ remains the sign of offense and the object of faith.

The possibility of offense is present every moment and constitutes the gulf between the individual and the God-Man, across which only faith can reach. The possibility of offense is then the stumbling block of faith.

Take away the stumbling block, as Kierkegaard claims Christendom had done, and Christianity becomes a superficial thing easily communicated directly. Yet the possibility of offense requires man's greatest attention because of the decision to become a believer. Direct communication, Kierkegaard believes, does not allow seriousness enough. It clouds issues with principles and personalities. It does not allow inwardness to develop. Faith, on the other hand, has its own dialectical quality. It needs only to be stimulated.

³²Ibid., p. 92.

Christianity is not a doctrine to be taught, but a relationship to be established. As in any rich and intimate relationship, belief and trust are required. Suffering is a prerequisite, an unavoidable necessity in indirect communication. Only those who will be able to assimilate faith will understand. To all others the communicator is an offense, as he embodies in his communication the offense of Christianity, the God-Man, which requires belief in opposition to the understanding.

VIII. A Witness To The Truth

In a sense, we have been on an erratic but gradually positive journey to this place, to the point where Kierkegaard launches his "Attack on Christendom." In a sense, the world had to wait until the symbol of Christendom died, unreformed, before Kierkegaard could become the prophet. As early as 1846 Kierkegaard expressed the limitations forced on him by his devotion to Bishop Mynster.

What I have always known within myself, and the reason why I have never spoken with any other man about my real concerns, has proved true again in my conversation with Mynster: it leads to nothing, for since I cannot and dare not speak of what entirely and essentially constitutes my inmost life, my conversations with others are almost a deceit on my part. In relation to Mynster I feel the real sadness of it all because I honour him so highly.³³

In 1851 he adds:

If I come into conflict with the establishment it will be entirely Mynster's fault. My whole endeavour is a defense of the established order, the only one that can honestly be made. Everything has been done to make things as gentle as possible for

³³Kierkegaard, The Journals, p. 112.

Mynster. But if he ends by obstinately maintaining that all his questionable preaching of Christianity, which has made Christianity into a theatrical amusement, is wisdom and Christianity, then it is he who made my attitude into something different.³⁴

As long as Mynster lived Kierkegaard hoped for an internal reform instigated on Kierkegaard's principles by Bishop Mynster. But Mynster could not be convinced, and was sometimes offended by Kierkegaard and his concepts. Søren had been "brought up" on Mynster's sermons. He held him in as high esteem as his own father. He felt that he ought to attack Christendom, but he would not, could not, as long as Mynster lived. In January, 1854, Mynster died. Still Kierkegaard waited, until the new bishop was securely enthroned. Then he attacked, at the point most sensitive to himself, "Was Bishop Mynster a 'Witness to the Truth'?"

In the address which Professor Martensen "delivered on the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, the Sunday preceding the burial of Bishop Mynster," a speech of remembrance it might be called for the reason that it brought to Professor Martensen's remembrance the vacant episcopal see -- in this address Bishop Mynster is represented as one of the genuine witnesses to the truth, this being affirmed in the strongest and most decisive terms it would be possible to use. With the figure of the deceased bishop, his life and the manner of it and the issue of it, before our eyes, we are exhorted "to imitate the faith of the true guide, the genuine witness to the truth", to imitate his faith, for that, as was said expressly of Bishop Mynster, was shown, "not merely by word and profession, but in deed and in truth. . . ."

Against this I must protest -- and now that Bishop Mynster is dead, I can speak willingly. . . .³⁵

³⁴Ibid., p. 208.

³⁵Søren Kierkegaard, Attack Upon "Christendom" 1854-1855 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 5.

On what criteria is this judgment based? Kierkegaard tells us at length.

A witness to the truth is a man whose life from first to last is unacquainted with everything which is called enjoyment -- and, ah, whether to you has been granted little or much, you know how pleasant is that which is called enjoyment! But his life from first to last was unacquainted with what is called enjoyment; on the other hand, from first to last it was initiated into what is called suffering -- and, alas, even you who have been exempted from the protracted, the more agonizing sufferings, you know nevertheless from your own experience how one winces at what is called suffering! But to that his life was initiated from first to last, by experiences which are even more rarely talked about among men, because they are more rarely encountered in the world, by inward conflicts, by fear and trembling, by trepidation, by anguish of soul, by agony of spirit, being tried besides by all the sufferings which are more commonly talked of in the world. A witness to the truth is a man who in poverty witnesses to the truth -- in poverty, in lowliness, in abasement, and so is unappreciated, hated, abhorred, and then derided, insulted, mocked -- his daily bread perhaps he did not always have, so poor was he, but the daily bread of persecution he was richly provided with every day. For him there was never promotion, except in an inverse sense, downward, step by step. A witness to the truth, one of the genuine witnesses to the truth, as a man who is scourged, maltreated, dragged from one prison to the other, and then at last -- the last promotion, whereby he is admitted into the first class as defined by the Christian protocol, among the genuine witnesses to the truth -- then at last -- for this is indeed one of those genuine witnesses to the truth of whom Professor Martensen speaks -- then at last crucified, or beheaded, or burnt, or roasted on a gridiron, his lifeless body thrown by the executioner in an out-of-the-way place (thus a witness to the truth is buried), or burnt to ashes and cast to the four winds, so that every trace of the "filth" (which the Apostle says he was) might be obliterated.

This is a witness to the truth, his life and career, his death and burial.³⁶

This is, of course, the Christ. There is then no other witness to the truth. The truth is witnessed to by the reaction of the world to that witness. Suffering, anguish, insult, maltreatment, death,

³⁶Ibid., p. 7.

these witness to the truth. Truth, here, witnesses to itself.

. . . But precisely in the very same sense that the child plays soldier it is playing Christianity to take away the danger (Christianly, "witness" and "danger" correspond), and in place of this to introduce power (to be a danger for others), worldly goods, advantages, luxurious enjoyment of the most exquisite refinements -- and then to play the game that Bishop Mynster was a witness to the truth, one of the genuine witnesses to the truth, to play it with such frightful earnestness that one cannot bring the game to a stop, but keeps on playing it into heaven itself, plays Bishop Mynster on into the holy chain of witnesses to the truth which stretches from the days of the Apostles to our times.³⁷

The fault lay not totally in Mynster, but in calling him "a witness to the truth." This is Martensen's error. It gave Kierkegaard the opportunity he sought. He could restrain his criticism no longer. Each reply brought on a more vicious and wider attack on Christendom.

Kierkegaard's conclusion was not that he passed judgment on Mynster, but that Mynster passed judgment on himself. On Monday, he felt, Mynster either did not know his own Sunday sermon, or he refused to acknowledge it. If he assumed the consequences of his own sermons, his mode of existence, his life, would have taken on an entirely different aspect. An enemy would have condemned him for this while he lived. A devotee would wait until the last moment, hoping for reform.

In all of this Kierkegaard was saying nothing new. He was only saying directly what he had said before indirectly. As he himself suggested, reflection must finally give way to action.

³⁷Ibid., p. 8.

IX. The Instant

So extreme was Kierkegaard's attack that he even claimed that, for Denmark, "Christianity does not exist -- as almost anyone must be able to see as well as I."³⁸ There was no longer any resemblance to New Testament Christianity. It appears that as long as Kierkegaard was reflective (all his life) he could witness to the "correctives" needed by Christianity. But when he became involved, was indeed the corrective himself, he could see nothing but his conception of his own task. He died in the front ranks of his own battle only a few months later.

It would be impossible to consider all of the aspects of this attack. In the heat of the battle, "at midnight," Kierkegaard published a pamphlet entitled The Instant, which immediately took on wide circulation, was subscribed to, and gave Kierkegaard more freedom of expression and an immediate audience. He felt that he was preaching in the street. Ten issues were written, the last lying completed on his desk at his death. It is not the content that we will consider here, however, but the concept: "the Instant."

In essence, the term goes back to Either/Or, to the moment of decision in which a man can win himself. All the deliberation in the world does not change the impact of "the Instant." After all a man's deliberation, Kierkegaard's still yells at him, "Either/Or." Not to choose is to wither away in consumption. The instant of choice

³⁸Ibid., p. 29.

cannot be maintained. It passes by in time. If it passes, a man loses his self; others (time) have decided for him.

In the religious realm, "the Instant" is the time when Eternity impinges on Time and a man has a chance to grasp Eternity. It is a time for action and not for thought. It is crucial to a man's salvation. In this moment he makes "the leap of faith," grasps eternity in hope, leaps forward into his own future. The Christian is a toiler grasping at salvation. A Moment is temporal; it passes. "The Instant" is an "atom of eternity."

In a sense, it is the opposite of man's desire to do everything "to a degree." A decisive effect is not achieved this way. It is achieved by concentrating everything at one point.

However, I can explain myself also more precisely. To produce a decisive effect -- and this is the task now -- is not a thing that can be done like everything else; and now especially when the misfortune of our age is precisely this motto, "to a certain degree," going in for things to a certain degree, when precisely this is the disease which has to be cured, one must above all take care if possible that it does not come to pass that only to a certain degree one goes into this matter -- for with that all is lost. No, a decisive effect is produced in a different way from other things. Like the spring of a wild beast upon its prey, like the blow of the eagle in its swoop -- do it is that the decisive effect is produced: suddenly, concentrated upon one point (intensive). And as the beast of prey unites shrewdness and strength: first it remains perfectly quiet, quiet as no tame beast can be, and then collects itself wholly in one spring or blow, as no tame beast can collect itself or can raise itself for a spring -- so is the decisive effect produced. First quietness, so quiet as it never is on a still day, quiet as it is only before the thunder -- and then the storm breaks loose.³⁹

"The Instant" is a gift to the believer. Believing is related as possibility to "the Instant." Its place in time is a secret

³⁹Ibid., p. 81.

eternally hidden from wordly shrewdness. "The Instant is when the man is there, the right man, the man of the Instant."⁴⁰ It is a new thing. Circumstances obey the man of "the Instant." When he ventures then is "the Instant." It and he have to do with heaven and with the eternal.

There is no longer room for detachment, for the delightful kaleidoscopic examinations of thought. Kierkegaard feels that he must work in "the Instant" because he would eternally regret not having done so. He would regret "that the generation now living would find the true presentation of Christianity interesting and curious at the very most, so as to remain where they are in the vain conceit that they are Christians and that the play-Christianity of the priests is Christianity."⁴¹ A revision of what Christianity is, a new definition, is what Kierkegaard has seen as his task. He is no "Christian," yet he is.

The severity toward oneself that Kierkegaard proposed is certainly not like that of Saint Francis. It is a necessary inner suffering, the sacrifice of a "stored-up" life. It is most difficult to be a Christian primarily because Christianity cannot be understood. It is a paradox. There is the need, therefore, of an inner rebellion and an inner reformation. The entire emphasis is subjective, the restoration of "unconditional human equality."

Kierkegaard claimed for himself no divine authority, an authority we might grant to Saint Francis. And yet when Kierkegaard

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 280.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 80.

finally launched his attack on Christianity, he set aside reflection for action. This was his "Instant," at least in an active sense. The question of his "Apostleship" needs to be answered in the light of this last effort. That this effort was an eruption of his years of reflection only slightly modifies the issue by the addition of a time element between "call" and "prophecy."

Kierkegaard's conception of sin as the death of the soul (spiritual death), was only the carrying forward of the pronouncements of the Old Testament prophets and of Paul. By "admiring" the religious (in our case, Christianity) we do take away the danger, the risk involved in living it. Religion becomes unthreatening and complacent. In such a state, any awareness of the terrible vengeful God, as of the Old Testament, is truly lost or forsaken. We have then only half an understanding of religion. Punishment is impossible and sin has no meaning.

Dread is educative. We are overwhelmed by possibility. With this idea our exploration of the conceptions of faith comes to an end. Faith is a necessary ingredient in life for historical man. Faith relates to our ultimate concern for that which is truly ultimate-God. Faith allows the Christian to "live" in history.

CHAPTER VII

A CONCEPTUAL CONCLUSION

THE HAWKER: Now step up, Ladies and Gentlemen! Now step up! Step up close as you like and look as long as you like! Now I want you all to gather around and take a good look at what I have for you here! . . . I want you to notice that the liquid in this bottle looks like water, smells like water, and tastes like water, if you taste it! But this colorless, odorless, tasteless liquid is one of the great miracles of the age! Because if you drink it, and there is anything wrong with you; mind you I said ANYTHING, then this liquid, this miracle, will cure and will remedy all the known and unknown ailments, traumas, diseases, illnesses, injuries, afflictions, and problems of man and woman! This is the universal panacea that all the learned men of the most important countries of the world have been searching for since the beginning of time! Step right up and take a bottle for yourself, absolutely free! That's right, I said free! I have drunk of this stuff and I am now incapable of making a profit on the misery of others! Step up and take a bottle for yourself!¹

The journey into faith is a journey in faith. The initial "leap" is required, but that "leap" may be only the clearing away of debris in order that a man may discover what he truly does believe. A wholistic view allows no separation. That is why the term "expression" of faith has been so useful in this dissertation. It implies either the concept of faith or its construction.

The Faith Hawker, quoted as introduction to this conclusion, is, in the play by that name, a faith-healer: that is, he heals faith. He is admittedly a fraud, but a unique fraud in that he deceives in order to help. When he tries to "sell" his product to

¹Howard Rodman, "The Faith Hawker," in Edward A. Powers, Journey Into Faith (Boston: United Church Press, 1964), p. 14.

someone who doesn't want it, he is willing to give it away. When approached specifically for his product, he refuses to give it away at any price. In essence, he can neither sell his product nor give it away, and he knows it. So he deceives in order to bring a man to his own faith.

This is one possible means of transmitting faith, that is, of passing on a belief in something. But the transmission of faith, in all of its ramifications, is much more complex than this. The tension in the relation of previous conceptions of faith to a changing situation make this obvious, as proved in this dissertation. The conceptions stated in this conclusion, therefore, have a great deal to do with the transmission of faith. Of course, the entire venture remains one of faith, or as Dietrich Bonhoeffer says one of "absolute insecurity."² There are no guarantees.

Conceptions are tools for understanding. They are not static elements but expand themselves with the understanding gained by their use. The word, however, applies both to the act of conceiving, a power of the mind, and to that which is being (or is) conceived: that is, to the results of the act of a power of the mind. The conception may be an idea or an image, a design or a scheme in the mind which may be applied by the mind in order to understand, that is, to apprehend the meaning of something. Or it may result in an idea or an image, a

²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship (London: S.C.M. Press, 1948), p. 49.

design or a scheme in the mind specifically because of apprehending the meaning of something. Without delving into the philosophical arguments in relation to such an explanation, or into the theological implications of such arguments, let us assume that both views above are justifiable and that their action is reciprocal.³ In this conclusion I will maintain a stress on the action of a conception applied even though that conception may be the result of previous conceptions applied, or the accidental arising of a conception in the mind out of prior knowledge attained.⁴ I believe that there must be some understanding already in the mind of that which needs to be understood by the mind. This is only to say that there must be some affinity between that which is at the moment within the mind and that which is attempting to be incorporated into the mind, regardless of the means which that incorporation takes.

The conceptions outlined in the previous chapters have come, in some fashion, out of the material studied. The choice of conceptions listed may be, in part, arbitrary but certainly not wholly, as many authorities agree on their value and on the value of their interrelation. What I imply is that each of these conceptions, now raised to the level of importance, may be used to understand the

³A dictionary definition, for example, lists both but doesn't speak to their relationship. Epistemology, of course, does.

⁴The inductive -- deductive argument in philosophy (logic) is certainly applicable here, as well as is the priori-a posteriori argument.

meaning of an historical situation, historical situations, or the development of an historical notion: that is, the development of the concept itself as it relates to the varying, changing, aspects of history.

In this sense, conceptions are "bridges" to the past. The concept of a transcendent God, for example, may be applied to the time of the Exodus, the Prophets, Christ, Saint Francis, and Kierkegaard; and, of course, to many others including our own.⁵ Is the concept appropriate? Is it expressed? Is it stressed? Is it expressed by the elite or by the common-folk? In what situation is it expressed? Why is it expressed? The questions that may be asked are numerous as the concept is being applied. Against its "sharpness" another fact of an historical situation is exposed. And the more exposures the more we understand the situation.

The method I am proposing, and it can easily be called a methodology, can be compared to that of a military commander in a time of peace as he travels through a countryside. The scene continually shifts, and as it shifts he pits his military knowledge against an imaginary enemy lodged in that scene. Against that enemy he places an imaginary force of his own, shifting his own forces and that of his enemies as if a real battle were ensuing and he were really striving for victory. The size, the shape, the makeup, the strategy of the opposing armies shift for each scene and within each scene.

⁵Karl Barth is, of course, the obvious example that it is stressed today at least by an "elite."

We would call the whole venture a game, except that we realize that such a man, constantly employing what he knows and incorporating always new concepts of warfare, would be the man most ready for a military crisis, especially if he has maintained a knowledge of what the real possible threats were to his country and a knowledge of the forces available to him, including potential recruitments and supplies.

It is just such a game the church plays, and just as crucial. The conceptions I have listed in this dissertation are just a few among the many that fall into the religious realm. That which we have available to us in scholarship can be understood. Theologically, they speak to us of God's revelation in the past. We deal with that which we can understand (our anthropological orientation) even as we trust in God's present revelations while doing so (our theological orientation).⁶

I. Analogy

The word analogy refers to a relation of likeness between two things. The resemblance may not be, and usually is not, total, but speaks to a partial correspondence which causes the similarity to be noted. The resemblance may arise within the mind spontaneously, or may be pointed out by an authority. In logic, such a conception

⁶On the emphasis of revelation over reason see Emil Brunner, Revelation and Reason (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1946).

suggests that if there are some noted similarities, there are also, probably, others that can be discovered. Therefore, if there are similarities at some points, there are probably similarities at many points. The number of similarities is limited by the mental criteria established. One person, for example, may see a "greater" similarity than another (or none at all) depending upon his conscious or unconscious criteria, as well as upon his ability to note similarities in the first place.

By way of illustration, I may state that the story of Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea and the history of the people of Israel are analogous. You may or may not initially agree. You may agree after I have pointed out some of the similarities. And as we proceed you yourself may note others that I do not see.

In the first place, old Santiago and the people of Israel are a "chosen" people. Israel is chosen by Yahweh in or out of the situation in which they find themselves. Santiago is chosen also in or out of the situation in which he finds himself. Both situations may be thought of as accidental, both may be thought of as desperate, both may be thought of as unique. Both bring man and nature into conflict. Both are alone in their conflict. Both are "without luck" by human standards. Both are resilient and "fatalistically" determined to succeed. Both get occasional outside help (the Old Man from the boy, and Israel from Cyrus, the Great, for example). Both consistently look as if they are premanently defeated. Both have a strange, cheerful, almost jubilant, undefeated inner core. Both are

"experienced" in their task, and depend on that "experience" where others depend on strength alone (Santiago: "there are many tricks").⁷ Both accept nature as both kind and cruel. Both get "caught" up in the conflict.

Both become trapped in their fate. They feel no alternative. Both cry for help. Both wish things were otherwise. Both face fate, finally, like men. Both succeed, and attain the promise. Both fail, and the promise is taken away. We may say that both ventured "too far out." Both knew pain and struggle. Both gained that which they did not seek (a grudging respect?).

Both feel they are being killed by their fate. Both are very aware of the human element in the struggle. Both find their fortune destroyed by elements they cannot control (other nations -- sharks). Both try. Both know life in its most essential element (blood). Both are involved in a tragedy that may be (is) read otherwise. Both return home, finally, stagger, suffer, but survive. Both dream (of lions). Both embody what is noble in man. Both are involved in this world, but somehow encompass a vast, transcendental element not of this world.

All of the above is still, perhaps, a fragment of the analogous elements. Each line could be read and analysed for possible similarities. It is not beneficial, however, to become that critical. The

⁷Ernest Hemingway, The Old Man and the Sea (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 15.

amazing part is that there is so much that is analogous on the surface. As both refer to the human condition in a crisis situation, we should not really be too surprised at the similarities. Yet, strangely, they pass us by -- perhaps because we are caught up in the impact of the one or of the other, or of something else.

It would be possible to say that our present, existential situation is analogous at least to varying aspects of the history of Israel or to The Old Man and the Sea. We can say this because of the affinities, the attractive forces between situations, between man present and man past, between man and man. When we ask the question of why the Scriptures speak to us, perhaps here we have part of the answer. Man in crisis, that is, at limits of his existence, is the same, that is, he has similarities with other men in crisis.

Not to take notice of similarities, not to note analogous situations, and not to note how, and with what conceptions, men face crisis situations is to deny ourselves a resource for survival. Crisis will arise. The conceptions of the past when understood in relation to a past situation may have affinities with our own conceptions in relation to our situation. Analogy points to the possibility.

We look at such a story as The Old Man and the Sea and we say it is popular because it speaks to our existential situation. If the Bible, at least the Old Testament, can be shown to be analogous to The Old Man and the Sea, then it must be analogous to our situation, as well. It is then, an initial resource for faith and a primary source-book in the history of faith.

II. Creativity

When the God of the Old Testament began His creation, the earth was a desolate waste, with darkness covering the abyss, and He said, "Let there be light" and made the firmament and divided the waters.

There are as many myths about the creation of the cosmos as there are peoples. Science has shown these myths of the origins of the material world to be at best charmingly naive, yet they keep their beauty and power. This is not only because of the grandeur of their language; they are all, I believe, variations on a single, much deeper theme: the creation of the cosmos and the drama of its slow unfolding is a symbol of the poet's experience of his own inner creation and his own slow opening to the light. On their deepest level all these myths are really concerned with the onto-genesis of the psyche itself.⁸

Neglecting the question in relation to "myths" in this statement by H. Westman in The Springs of Creativity, there is truth here. The theme of creation is a theme that permeates the Bible. It flows from the opening words ("In the beginning God created. . ." Genesis 1:1), through the Psalms ("Create in me a clean heart O God," Psalm 51:10), through Paul's writings ("Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation," II Corinthians 5:17), and into Revelations ("Behold I make all things new," Revelations 21:5).⁹ The new ages referred to in Chapter IV are new creations. The sweeping arc of history can be understood, and has been understood, as the replacement of age upon age, new creation replacing old. Man is even understood as "changed" within his lifetime, that is, as newly created ("born anew," John 3:3ff).

⁸H. Westman, The Springs of Creativity (New York: Atheneum, 1961), p. 23.

⁹On this theme see Langdon Gilkey, Maker of Heaven and Earth (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

If this idea is stressed, a distinction must be made between the "original" creation (which Westman is denying), as well as the last creation, as different from any middle-ground creation concept. In both first and last (idealistic?) creation no vestiges of the past remain, or there was no past at all. Creation-in-the-middle cannot deny adhering remnants of that which was before. Any middle-ground creation is, therefore, not entirely new. If man is involved in the eighth day of creation, and is the instrument, in part, of that creation, as well, it is not creation ex nihilo.

Part of that new creation is internal. Man is being created even as he creates. The potential for perfection, or wholeness, is there.

. . .I believe a man is potentially whole within himself, a unity and totality, and if he can be said really to have a destiny, it lies here, in the realization of this potential wholeness. The psyche is determined by it, for this is the psyche's evolutionary aim and the purpose of its growth.

From the instant in the history of the species when man first glimpsed his possible humanity, from that moment in our own individual histories when we first glimpse it for ourselves, the struggle has been and always is to emerge from the autonomy of nature, to achieve a relationship with the forces of the natural order, both inner and outer, so that we are no longer driven blindly by them as primitive man is driven, no longer contained within nature as he is, but distinct within it, having as men the power to choose. The psyche has grown and will continue to grow to the degree that this struggle is won or lost.¹⁰

What Westman is talking about here is personality. It emerges in the struggle. It is "that indefinable means by which a man is related with the world within himself and the world around him."¹¹

¹⁰Westman, op. cit., p. 13. ¹¹Ibid., p. 14.

The Christian image of the whole man, Westman claims, was born out of man's relation to man, the universe and God, fostered personality.

Against this view of wholeness, the use of reason alone is an iconoclasm. So is the history of Protestantism. He agrees here with Paul Tillich and C. G. Jung.

C. G. Jung has called the history of Protestantism a history of continuous 'iconoclasm' ('the destruction of pictures,' i.e., of religious symbols) and, consequently, the separation of our consciousness from the universally human 'archetypes' that are present in the subconscious of everybody. He is right. Protestants often confuse essential symbols with accidental signs. They often are unaware of the numinous power inherent in genuine symbols, words, acts, persons, things. They have replaced the great wealth of symbols appearing in the Christian tradition by rational concepts, moral laws, and subjective emotions. This also was a consequence of the Protestant protest against the superstitious use of the traditional symbols in Roman Catholicism and in all paganism. But here also the protest has endangered its own basis.¹²

All fragmentations and projections are dangerous. The lack of a "whole" concept of personality (etymologically related to hale, that is, healthy and holy) and the projection of that which is deepest in man out onto some object or group destroys man. Choice and responsibility vanish. The loss of traditional authorities, the loss of "any moral, ethical or transcendal yardstick by which to decide what 'rightness' might be,"¹³ the internal "emptiness" or lack of relation to the forces of a man's inner world, leaves man in despair or in a moral stupor. This, Westman states, is evidence of our present condition.

¹²Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 19. Quoted by Westman, op. cit., p. 15.

¹³Westman, op. cit., p. 18.

The reciprocal of such a state is a lack of creative action. We fall back onto whatever symbols are available to sustain man. We trust momentarily in our old and now static conceptions until they fail. And fail they must under such conditions. The creative process is an ongoing process. To halt is to die, at least a spiritual death. The ancient conceptions, such as those set forth in this dissertation, are intended to be sparks to new faith, new revelations, and new conceptions.

The value of The Springs of Creativity becomes obvious here. Westman relates a particular, artistic patient (Joan) to his conceptions of the Old Testament and to the findings of contemporary psychology. It is peculiarly vivid because of the patients ability to draw the turmoil of her emotional life and to relate to such drawings. The repressing of the creative flow is also the repressing of personality.

For us, it is not quite so obvious a situation. A schizophrenic process is at work, however. We are continually conscious and critical of whatever we do. In such a situation, there can be no intense singlemindedness.¹⁴ There is little creation.

To review Westman's approach, or rather the basis for his approach:

. . .With the monotheism of the Old Testament, all creation had been discovered to be the work of one God, who was not only creator but lawgiver to His creation. The world was whole, and

¹⁴And for Bonhoeffer no "Single-Minded Obedience," see The Cost of Discipleship, pp. 69-83.

man was whole within it because he believed himself to be made in the image of the one God. This conviction gave him a relation to the natural order he had never experienced before. Then the Christian mystery of God becoming man gave him the possibility of a new relation to himself. If he had been the prey and victim of the forces of the natural world, he had been equally the prey and victim of the forces of his own nature, that portion of himself that by virtue of its seeming autonomy made him the brother of beasts. But now within the inner world the seemingly unbreakable circle, the pagan's eternal round, irrevocable in its turning back upon itself, was broken and the upward surge of creativity was discovered not only the natural world but in man himself. He could be related with, no longer subject to, the forces of his own nature. In depending upon the unity of God, man and the universe, this surge depended perforce on the whole of man, on flesh and spirit, on a potential unity that reconciled the dualities within him.¹⁵

If such be the case, external and internal history are irrevocably related, and faith is the obverse side of history. Creativity in man is the natural concomitant to creativity in nature; together they create that which is revealed in history, which is only to say that God is still involved in his creation.

III. Intimacy

Religion was a corporate experience for ancient Israel. It was necessarily intimate. Their worship was close and personal. It was not involved in abstractions. Even Yahweh was most easily explained by Israel as personality. From Moses to Jesus, God related personally to certain individuals, as well. Man conversed with God, listened in on his councils, saw and heard his judgments on mankind. The entire covenant relationship is most easily seen as trust, an

¹⁵Westman, op. cit., p. 6.

intimate and loyal faith.

As it developed, however, even though a man might be intimate with his God, that intimacy was not easily revealed to another man in the situation of estrangement, historically, in Israel. The syncretistic elements during prophetic times are a cause for prophecy, and yet a reason for the refusal to listen to the prophetic message. The prophets were forced by Yahweh to reveal an intimate message from Yahweh to his people in an estranged situation. When confronted and condemned by the people for their message the prophets justified their action referring to their intimate relationships with Yahweh. Willingly, as Isaiah, unwillingly, as Jeremiah, or non-committal, as Amos, they revealed themselves, regardless. The message was spoken and justified out of intimate experiences. In John's Gospel, Jesus is shown as the revealer of intimacies ("I and the Father are one," John 10:30. "I am the way," John 14:6, etc.).

Obviously, and unfortunately, intimacy may be a one-sided experience. It may also be so necessarily. The revelations of God are most intimate, yet they fall on the just and on the unjust; on the just for their education, on the unjust for their salvation.

The situation for the transmission of faith is, essentially, intimate. There is intimacy in the relationship (often one-sided). That which is related is of a most intimate nature, that is, it speaks of the relations of God and man, and man and man. Christianity speaks of this extremely intimate relationship thus: "When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment

to his person."¹⁶ Anything else is superfluous.

Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or on the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous, and in fact they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever, and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ. With an abstract idea it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; but it can never be followed in personal obedience. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth which has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son. And a Christianity of that kind is nothing more nor less than the end of discipleship.¹⁷

In this regard, Kierkegaard realized that he was only a teacher and not a disciple: that is, in his words, a Genius and not an Apostle. Thus, the deception. He was truly "without authority," yet he gave Christendom a most excellent description of what Christianity is. It may be that Kierkegaard was narcissistic, that he reached the extremes of Romanticism, that he was involved with the full-range of positive and negative self-feelings, but out of all of it he came to understand the existential situation, and was able to characterize it with unusual accuracy.

In part, Kierkegaard was driven to the extremes of Individualism as a reaction against Hegelian philosophy. The extreme individualist will not have any disciples (they will have no known reason to be a disciple). Kierkegaard's deception made it a certainty. Yet he

¹⁶Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 50.

was one-sidedly intimate; but even in that intimacy he was deliberately repellant. As he said he was making Christianity difficult. For him, that was exactly what it is.

At the other extreme, Saint Francis was overly intimate. He was what he was. He said what he was. He shocks us with our own unworthiness, with the fact that we are not holy. He would have us follow his example, which is the example of Jesus, himself, but that fact itself is repellant, and we make the necessary comparisons with Christ, the contrasts (extremes) to Christ. Yet, we are aware that he was not Christ (there is no need for another) but a disciple of Christ. He was a disciple, at least, of Christ's example and impact, of select conceptions of the Gospel stories. And he did it so thoroughly that no other can really follow. He has no true disciple.¹⁸ His followers are right to admire him -- and yet establish an institution.

We become "teachers about" and not the "proclaimers of" a revelation. Power is gone.¹⁹ It can only be incarnate in a relation of intimacy between a believer and his Lord. But that relationship is exposable. This is the witness of the believer. It is not

¹⁸No "founder" does. Compromises are made to personalities and situations. All one can do with a "complete" example is to distort it. See, for example, Irving Stone, The Agony and the Ecstasy (New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. 565f in relation to Michelangelo's work.

¹⁹"Quote" G. Van Der Leeuw, Religions in Essence and Manifestation (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), I, 228.

explained, or proved. It is stated in a situation of possible faith. It is stated in defense of a proclamation of faith. It is stated in the hope of a continuance of faith, of its implantation or inspiration in a life. But it is only stated to be accepted or rejected.

Such exposure of faith is essential to faith's transmission. The exposure involves risk, especially the risk of personal rejection, an excommunication from a group or an individual. Such a rejection involves pain. It can be expected, as to Jesus in Luke 9:57-62. The exposure is explained by love. It is done out of necessity. It is unavoidably entertained. Passion and compassion are found here in one great venture of faith in faith.

IV. Responsibility

Throughout the Bible, God holds man responsible for his actions. The covenant concept involved human responsibilities -- conditions. In prophetic times, the people were measured against their responsibilities as "chosen people." Regardless of the fact that other nations cannot be rejected by him because they have not been accepted by him, they also are responsible to the unwritten covenants, as are Christians as well. Further, Christians are responsible also for their attitudes and motives because of their relation to the love revealed behind the law that finally supercedes the law, in Christ.

We are free to hold to all of the religious conceptions of the past, including the conceptions listed in this dissertation. But

even here it is a conditional and a responsible relationship. At the same time that a shift in the meaning of conception of faith becomes manifest, so does a shift in responsibility. For example, the "Day of Yahweh" conception was held as a message of hope for Israel up until the time of Amos. With him it became a message of judgment for Israel, as well. When the situation changes, a change in the conception of faith becomes necessary. Though it may not be as obvious a change as with Amos, some interpretation is needed. Someone must act as interpreter. Thus, the will of God is manifest through persons.

The situation is a dangerous one. Risk remains a central element in the transmission of faith. It is a risk we would rather avoid. It is true of Israel in general, of the prophets, of Saint Francis, of Kierkegaard, and, of course, of Jesus. Yet, the responsibility must be faced. Israel, Amos, Jesus, Saint Francis, and Kierkegaard all had to face the ramifications of the past, of their heritage, and of history, in relation to their present situation.

That which is "new" in a religious conception lies in its interpretation, or reinterpretation. The impact of the passover of Exodus 12, for example, is changed when it becomes associated with the temple. It changes from a household ritual throughout Israel to a worship experience at Jerusalem. (II Kings 23:21-23) That it did revert back to the household during the exile shows that the earlier vestiges of the act were not forgotten.

It is the same for us. We need to interpret faith and ritual

to fit our situation. Yet, the earlier understanding is not forgotten. The obvious passover symbolisms in our celebration of the Lord's supper should perhaps be the most consistent example for Christians. Unfortunately, it is not. Christianity tends to reject its Jewish heritage, even as our present society tends to reject its immediate Christian heritage. The emphasis of the prophets becomes pertinent here. The restoration of a relationship to God depends in part upon restoring our relationship to our past: that is, on making history and destiny personal.

The tension remains between our present situation and past conceptions of our faith. As Tillich pointed out, the symbols (expressions) in which faith is manifest at a particular time are not ultimate. The ultimate is not destroyed by a shifting emphasis among concepts or by their reinterpretation, or even by a disregarding of the unsuitable, the meaningless, concept. Man responds meaningfully to divine action or he dies a spiritual death. That response usually is in a reinterpretation of past expressions of faith and in a new "clustering" of those interpretations; recognizing continually that they include the new and the old in a unique relationship of faith to life.

V. Application

The break with tradition in contemporary culture is not a novel venture. It happened also, for example, at the time of the

Reformation.²⁰ The situation becomes one in which each man holds together the web of existence -- for himself. Therefore, he needs faith. But the situation is really not so different at a time like this. The web is held in trust for mankind. Therefore, he must attempt to transmit that faith. What form that transmission takes is initially dependent upon the conceptions of faith held by the believer. The means is dependent upon personality structure, but not upon that alone. The transmission of faith becomes dependent, eventually, upon the life of faith. It is, still, God's action.

To review the material in this dissertation is to see that God's action demands the involvement of persons. The faith of Santiago is expressed by his person-hood (if I may use such a term). It involves his life and his words, which are extensions of that life. Faith cannot be rejected on account of the language which it chooses (symbol, word, or act). It is, however, limited in its communicative power by that language. But language can and does change. The Ultimate can again be expressed in "new" language to "new" situations (which also are not entirely new as they also include the past).

Religious conceptions, like ancient covenants, are points of remembrance, not just for Israel but for Christians. They are interpretations of existence. They focus on the action of God in history. Faith remains a positive response to that action, climaxed

²⁰See E. Harris Harbison, The Age of Reformation (New York: Cornell University Press, 1955).

in the act of love in Christ. History is a witness to the actions of Divinity. Man's meaningful response is his greatest act of freedom.

Nothing of value to religious experience can be allowed to remain frozen in the past. We need, therefore, the interpreter, who in interpreting risks his own "secure" existence. Religious heritage and contemporary religious faith go together, even as the Christ-event remains both past and present in the experience of the believer. The offense of Christianity lies in that paradox.

Saint Francis' open commitment to his own interpretation of Scripture as well as Kierkegaard's deliberate deception remain both appealing and repellant to modern man. This is partly because of the ideals chosen and expressed by them, and partly because of our need to find our own unique expression, both in life and thought. We cannot avoid an interpretation of faith: that is, we cannot avoid our responsibilities in relation to past, present, and future, at least not if our lives are going to have meaning both for ourselves and for mankind.

The crux of the matter is this: we are involved in a "new" social situation in which the "Old Conceptions of faith appear inadequate; in spite of this we must focus our attention on the past because the actions of God are revealed there to the man of faith. To put it in other words, the present is illuminated by the events of the past. History is our history. It is our heritage, an inheritance of meaningful expressions in relation to various historical situations

Furthermore, the destiny spoken of in the past is our destiny. It speaks of our future. In this sense both past and future become meaningful in our present moment. To reiterate the message of the prophets, history and destiny become personal. At the junction point of existence and meaning stands faith. Faith and history are inextricably related.

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